

*The
Virtuous
Woman*

Proverbs 31:10—31
A description of the
Lamb's Wife

by
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*“Who can find a virtuous wife?
For her worth is far above rubies.”*

Proverbs 31:10 NKJV

This book is a compilation of my sermon notes of a series of lessons I gave on the Virtuous Woman as described in **Proverbs 31**. These notes have not been greatly edited from their original “sermon note” format so you may find some of the thoughts not as fully developed as you might find in a “commentary” format, but hopefully this book will be helpful in stirring your interest in studying this subject further.

There are many lessons that we can learn from this passage and there are several profitable ways to study it. Please, take the time to open your Bible and read each of the references listed in the lesson as they appear. God’s Word is life and light. Reading it will give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to reveal to you God’s eternal plans and purposes that are found in Christ for you.

Literal – In this study we are not going to stress the literal applications of the truths revealed in this passage, but we need to understand that the traits of love, loyalty, kindness, wisdom, compassion, diligence and faith are the traits that God is looking for in Christian women today. Many of the ills of our society can be traced to the devastation of the family unit. Such devastation is the result of men who do not love their wife as Christ loved the Church and of women who have refused to be virtuous as described in this passage.

Spiritual Lessons – In this series of lessons I want to stress the spiritual lessons found in this passage. In the Bible a woman many times is used to symbolically represent a group or body people and especially a religious or spiritual group of people. I think it's important for us to see the establishment of this precedent before we can fully appreciate the symbolic teaching of this passage.

Israel - Isaiah 54:4 – 6 – the nation of Israel is often represented in the Old Testament as a symbolic woman, the wife of Jehovah.

The Apostate Church – Revelation 17:1 – 5 – this harlot is clearly representative of a body of people and not just one individual female.

The True Church – II Corinthians 11:2, 3 – Paul likens those of the Church to an espoused bride, but fears that some will be drawn away during this espousal or engagement period from the single-mindedness required to actually enter into the marriage with the Lamb of God. Unfaithfulness during the engagement period annuls the promise of marriage. Remember the subject here is a marriage relationship between the Man of Glory and His espoused beloved, not the relationship of a Father with His child. Paul did not fear that some Corinthian believers were in jeopardy of losing their eternal life, but of being disqualified to be the Bride of Christ.

Though every true Christian is espoused to Christ, not every believer will attain to this highest place in glory. The whole Church will not make up the company of believers that will be known as the Lamb's Wife.

Once one has accepted Jesus as their personal Savior, by faith in His atoning death on the cross, he or she cannot lose their salvation that was freely given to them by grace. (John 3:16 / John 10:27—30 / Ephesians

10:8—10) Their eternal destiny is glory in heaven. Salvation is a prerequisite to be in the Bridal company and enters you into the engagement relationship with Christ, but singleness of love, commitment and devotion to Christ is required during the engagement period or the privilege of entering into the marriage with Christ is lost.

Paul describes the same relationship using a different analogy in **I Corinthians 9:24 – 27** – unfaithfulness or unlawfulness leads to disqualification for the position of the Lamb's wife, the prize for faithful, loving service to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:31 – 33 – Paul reveals that the hidden purpose of God in ordaining the marriage relationship is to illustrate the truth that Jesus Christ desires to enter into a loving partnership with a body of faithful believers.

It's no wonder that the Biblical relationship of the marriage of one man with one woman being mutually faithful to each other until separated by death is being so fiercely attacked today. This is God's greatest and highest purpose, to provide His Son with an appropriate wife. No wonder Satan is trying so hard to eradicate God's ordained illustration of this purpose. This is why it is so important for us to make sure that our marriages are appropriate examples of God's highest purpose to provide a faithful wife to rule and reign with Christ as a joint, equal heir.

We should constantly seek God for strength and wisdom to faithfully fulfill our roles in the marriage relationship, not just for our own sake or for our spouse's sake, but that we might provide the world with an accurate picture of Christ and His Bride.

Revelation 19:6 – 8 – John was given a glimpse of that glorious day to come and shares it with us. It's important to understand that the Lamb's wife is a symbolic woman who represents a group of individuals. Her dress is made up of the righteous acts, not of the saint, but of the saints.

Having established the Biblical precedent for viewing women in scripture in a symbolic way, I want to study this virtuous woman found in **Proverbs 31** as a picture of the kind of Christian that will be found worthy to be called the Lamb's wife. If we want to be among those saints that will enjoy such an intimate and glorious place with Christ in eternity, we must allow the Spirit to work in us the same virtues that are found in this symbolic woman.

Verse 10 – Who can find a virtuous woman or wife? The description starts out by declaring that a woman of the following virtues is rare and unique. In other words there are relatively few and therefore such a wife is priceless.

Most wives in ancient times were obtained by arrangement by parents or political powers. Love and virtue were seldom the criteria for marriage. As a result many wives could not be trusted by their husbands. Many would steal from their husbands or embarrass them in one way or another, sometimes on purpose and sometimes without thinking. It was a legitimate question. A man who found himself married to a virtuous woman was very fortunate indeed.

Is it a legitimate question to ask today about Christians? Who can find a virtuous, faithful believer? Are we being fanatical and isolationists when we say that the Bride of Christ will be made up of a small portion of the Body of Christ? Numerically, I think that the number of saints in the Bridal company will be many, but proportionately, it will be a small percentage of Christians.

“For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.” NKJV **Philippians 2:19 – 21** What a sad statement. At this time in Paul's ministry, of all those who had been associated with him and worked with him,

only Timothy was found to be seeking the things that were pleasing to the Lord.

It doesn't take much insight to understand that the vast majority of God's people are more concerned with their own comfort, pleasure and ambitions than with that of their espoused husband, the Lord Jesus Christ. You can gauge their interest in the things of the Lord by the time, energy and resources they invest in the things that are pleasing to the Lord.

All through the Bible, Old and New Testament, we see the truth illustrated and demonstrated for us of how few of God's people are truly faithful to live a life that honors Him. We see countless examples of how only a relatively few personally enter into God's best for them.

The first indication found in the Bible that the whole Church will not make up the company of the Lamb's Wife is seen in the creation of Adam and his wife. Only a rib portion was taken from his body to build his wife. You can't build a doctrine from a type alone, but with the clear doctrinal statements that we have already read concerning the marriage relationship, we see what a clear picture this is of the wife that is being built for the Second Adam, Jesus Christ. A rib portion of the Body of Christ will make up the group of believers that will enter into this most privileged place in eternity known as the Lamb's wife.

No Respector Of Persons – Some will argue, “but that can't be. God is no respecter of persons.” That's true, but that doesn't mean that He rewards everyone the same regardless of their personal conduct. It means that He gives everyone the same opportunity to do His will and obtain to His fullest reward - *Ephesians 6:5 – 9* Everywhere you find reference to God's impartiality in Scripture it is emphasizing God's standard of judgment. The standard is the same for everyone, but it is our

agreement with or rejection of that very standard that results in some of God's people attaining to God's best and some not.

Old Testament Examples – The children of Israel numbered two to three million people. To Moses alone, God showed His ways. To the rest His Works - *Psalm 103:7* Out of a whole generation only Joshua and Caleb entered into their full inheritance. Gideon started out with an army of 32,000 men, but only 300 men were found to be battle ready. David had a whole army, but only three men were called mighty men of David. Elijah and 7,000 others, out of all of Israel, were found to be faithful followers of Jehovah during the time of wicked Jezebel. All through the history of Israel we see that the faithful were always in the minority.

New Testament Examples – Of the true disciples of Jesus, we read that only 70 were sent out and entrusted to preach the gospel. *Luke 10:1* From the 70 disciples Jesus chose 12 that were to be His constant students and companions. Of the 12, three, Peter, James and John were privileged to share certain moments with Jesus that the others were not. *Luke 9:28—36* Of those three, John is known as the disciple whom Jesus loved. *John 13:23*

We see further evidence in the book of Revelation of the truth that relatively few of God's people will attain to the closest place to Christ in eternity. In the book of Revelation Jesus dictated seven letters to seven Churches. Only two out of the seven were without rebuke. Revelation is a book of symbolic numbers. We find numbers given for almost everything and everyone mentioned in this prophetic book. The groups of redeemed saints that represent faithful believers are represented by numbers like, 4, the four living ones, 24, the 24 elders, 1, the Lamb's wife. Those are all relatively "small" numbers

used to represent overcoming, faithful believers. However, Christians who needed to wash their defiled robes before being taken to Heaven are represented by an innumerable company. *Revelation 7:9—17* Clearly, this group represents the vast majority of believers who have not proven to be virtuous in their living before the coming of Christ. In a book that is full of symbolic numbers, it is significant that no number can be given for this great multitude of people, redeemed, but whose garments were stained by having walked after the lusts of the flesh.

Who can find a virtuous Christian? Truly, they are few and rare, but may the Lord find one in me and in you.

Because He gives the same opportunity to every believer the only thing that can keep me from being in the Bride of Christ is my own unbelief and rebellion. “...*For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure*” *Philippians 2:13* My part is simply to yield to His working in me. *I Corinthians 15:10* makes it clear that it’s only by His grace and favor that we are able to be faithful in our labors for Him. *Ephesians 3:14 – 21* Tells us that it’s only by His Spirit and power that will be able to experience the depths of the love of God.

It really boils down to whether or not I want Christ to find me to be a virtuous believer or not. If I do, I will gladly yield myself to His work of Grace. I will seek His will and pleasure diligently and seek to be daily led by His Spirit.

Her worth is above rubies – Do you realize the value Christ puts on the faithfulness that will characterize His Bride? Jesus died for the sins of the whole world yet only those who are saved will experience His love and grace. Jesus loves all believers, but only those who are found to be virtuous will experience the fullness of His love and grace.

The price – We were justified by faith, not merely

to save us from hell, but that we might begin to prepare to sit with Christ in His throne. So the price of our salvation is a clue to the worth Christ puts on faithful saints even though not every saved person lives up to their potential. **I Peter 1:18, 19** - We were purchased with His own blood. **Ephesians 5:25 - 27** - Christ gave Himself for the Church, the “called out ones.” Every believer is certainly “called out” from the rest of humanity unto eternal life. Christ gave Himself for the whole Church to purchase their redemption. However, the whole Church has not responded to the call to daily obedience and have not availed themselves to the daily washing of the Word that will prepare us to be the Bride of Christ. The ultimate purpose of having been called out was in order that we might be the Lamb’s Wife. All Christians certainly make up that joy spoken of in **Hebrews 12:1, 2**, but none bring greater joy to the Lord than those who are characterized by the virtues of the virtuous woman described in **Proverbs 31**.

Romans 8:16, 17 reveals that saving faith results in an inheritance from the Father which includes eternal life and a home in heaven. Living faith is going to be rewarded with joint-heirship with the Son of God who is Heir of all things. Jesus places great value on the virtuous Christian. He has promised to share with such believers the fullness of all that He is and has.

Verses 11 & 12 - *“The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.”*
NKJV

Her husband trusts in her. He doesn’t have to worry about her bringing him to ruin or shame by her irresponsible behavior. She is trustworthy and faithful.

All of us have embarrassed our spouse at one time

or another, but there are those men and women who are characterized by the things that destroy their noble spouses. Their behavior is reckless. There are husbands that shame their wife by their drunkenness or gambling or rude behavior. There are wives who bring their husband to financial ruin by their uncontrolled spending and selfishness. There are those who conduct themselves improperly in public and that embarrass their husband. This virtuous woman is not like that.

Not only does she not shame him or ruin him, but her prudent behavior and conduct bring him honor, fame and wealth. How pleasant to have a spouse that reflects well on you and your choice of a spouse.

What kind of betrothed spouse are you to the Lord Jesus Christ? Does His heart trust in you? In other words, can He trust you to trust Him? Does your daily conduct and activity bring Him shame or honor? Does your life bring Him added glory?

These two things are certain. 1) The Lamb's wife will be a spiritual, virtuous woman. 2) Not all believers are spiritually virtuous or bring honor to the Lord Jesus when it comes to their daily conduct.

There are so many believers that refuse to obey God's loving instruction. They can't be trusted to do His will and cause His Gospel to prosper. He has to constantly run behind them and clean up the messes that they create for themselves and those around them.

How refreshing it must be for Christ to be able to simply express His will to a faithful saint and to know that He can trust that individual to obey and cause the will of God to bring forth eternal fruit for His glory. I want to be that kind of believer. *Psalm 32:8, 9* I want to be guided by His eye, by the slightest indication of what is pleasing to Him.

II Corinthians 6:3 – 10 - It was Paul's desire

never to bring offense to the Gospel. He always remembered to whom he belonged and acted accordingly. **Philippians 2:19 – 22** – Timothy was not seeking his own pleasure or profit, but he desired to occupy himself with the things that were pleasing to the Lord and that prospered the Lord's will and purpose.

Most believers are seeking their own things rather than the interests of their Beloved. They are untrustworthy. What would we think of a woman who was married to a very successful and honest business man who was in the middle of a very important business deal and who began to have an affair with her husband's biggest competitor? She divulges all the details of her husband's business deal and allows her husband's competitor to undercut the deal and make the deal himself.

That's an unfaithful, untrustworthy wife to say the very least. And yet that is exactly what is taking place when Christians love the world and seek the fulfillment of their own carnal desires rather than seeking to do the will of God. Does the heart of the Lord trust in you to actively seek the things that will bring Him glory?

Colossians 1:9 – 14 – If we are not continually being filled with the knowledge of His will for our life, we are not walking in a worthy manner. If we lack wisdom and spiritual understanding in our day-to-day decisions, we are not pleasing the Lord. If we are not being fruitful in every good work, increasing in our knowledge of God, strong in the Lord, patient, longsuffering, joyful and thankful, we are not pleasing our beloved betrothed Bridegroom. If we are not characterized by these virtues, we are being unfaithful and untrustworthy.

We need a fresh revelation of what Christ has done for us. When you fall in love with Jesus Christ and you realize with Whom we have been espoused, it is not a dreadful thing to live pleasing to Him. The things that are

pleasing to Him are the things that are for our eternal benefit. The glory that we bring to Him, He has promised to share with us as joint, equal heirs.

This truth of being a spiritual, submissive, faithful wife is not a truth that brings bondage and oppression, but rather it brings joy and wealth. This description of a virtuous woman, though we see much labor, diligence, loyalty and submission, is not a description of a miserable slave. Here we have a picture of a strong, joyful, peaceful, content, wealthy partner of an influential man. We need a revelation of the hope of our calling.

II Corinthians 5:9, 10 – Our motivation for faithful service should be our love for the Lord Jesus Christ. We should not fear the day when we give an account of our life to the Lord, but rather we should look forward to the day when we can present to Him the fruit of our life that was lived to please Him. We are to make pleasing the Lord our ambition in life because we know that Christ will have a virtuous woman or body of believers to be His eternal partner. Your love for Christ will not allow you to behave rudely or in an unbecoming manner. — **I Corinthians 13:5**

Proverbs 12:4 – Which are you to your Espoused Bridegroom, a crown or a cancer? May the Lord's heart trust us to trust Him to make us fit to sit with Him in His throne.

Verse 13 – *“She seeks wool and flax, And willingly works with her hands.” NKJV*

This verse describes her as a woman who willingly renders a service of love. She's not afraid to work with her hands, but rather is eager to do so.

There is so much unwillingness to serve among God's people today. Few are willing to go the inconvenience of ministering to others as the Lord directs. Sacrifices in our daily walk are considered intrusions into

our private, personal life.

Having been in Church all my life and having been the pastor of several meetings over some 26 years (as of 2004), I have often heard the complaints of those who end up carrying most of the weight of a meeting and doing most of the work. Many gripe about those who refuse to do their fair share. There have been times when I have been tempted to similar thinking and even fallen in the trap of murmuring. However, the Spirit has seldom allowed me to dwell on such thoughts for very long. The virtuous woman willingly works with her hands whether anyone else does or not. **Colossians 3:17, 23, 24** – If we don't do what we do as unto the Lord, it is all for naught. If we do it as unto the Lord we should do it willingly and with all our heart knowing that it is pleasing to Him whether anybody else knows or cares about it. **Philippians 2:14** – Do all things without murmuring and complaining.

I Thessalonians 1:2 – 4 – Paul commends the Thessalonians for their labor of love. We serve the Lord because we love Him. There is work and sacrifice involved in doing the will of God and ministering to God's people, but for the spiritually minded, there is a willingness to work and sacrifice that comes from an understanding of and appreciation for the love of God. **II Corinthians 9:7** – God is seeking those who will give out of love whether it be money or time or effort. God loves and rewards a cheerful, willing giver.

The virtuous woman delights in doing whatever she can to minister to her husband and her family. For those saints who will make up the Bride of Christ there really are no sacrifices only opportunities to serve and to express our love to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wool and flax or linen are specifically mentioned

in connection with her willingness to work with her hands. It was quite a chore to make clothes in those days. There wasn't any "House of Fabric" sewing stores or any motorized sewing machines. Thread had to be made from the raw material, fabric needed to be woven and then put together by hand. From the wool and linen clothing was made.

Clothing serves two primary purposes; protection and beauty. She was willing to put forth such great effort to seek wool and linen in order that her family and others would have the protection and beauty of clothing.

Wool of course comes from sheep and reminds us of Lamb of God and the protection that comes from faith in Him. Linen in the Bible often is symbolic of God's righteousness. In ***Revelation 19*** the dress of the Lamb's wife is made of fine linen and is said to represent the righteous acts or the deeds of practical righteousness done by faithful believers.

Our spiritual protection and beauty come from faith in Jesus Christ. He is the source. Yet in our analogy, these things are the result of the work of her hands. Every believer is called to walk in good works - ***Ephesians 2:8 – 10*** We don't save anyone. We are not the source of spiritual protection and beauty, but when we willingly serve the Lord, in a sense, we are providing others with the garment of salvation and practical righteousness. We are God's instruments to make it available to others.

II Corinthians 5:20, 21 – As Christ's ambassadors, on behalf of Christ we implore others to accept God's salvation. ***I Peter 2:11, 12*** – Others may glorify God by our good works. ***Hebrews 10:24, 25*** – We are to provoke one another to love and good works which are the spiritual garments that bring protection and

beauty to God's people.

Ephesians 4:22 – 24 – We are to be clothed ourselves in these works or clothing of the New Man and everything we do should encourage others to be clothed with the same spiritual protection and beauty of the New Man. Be willing to work with your hands that others may know the beauty and protection of being clothed with the New Man. Be willing and faithful to promote the whole counsel of sound doctrine that God's people may grow thereby. - **Acts 20:26—32**

The Lord has always impressed upon me the value that He places on me being willing to serve Him and His people in any way that He directs. When the labor gets tedious, long, hard and unappreciated by others, He reminds me that I am to do it as unto Him. As I contemplate His love for me, I quickly realize there is nothing that I could be called on to do that would be greater than what His love merits.

He has impressed upon me the need to point others to salvation and a life of righteousness for God's glory and for their own protection and spiritual beauty. How can I hold back anything that would be beneficial to the spiritual well-being of those that Christ purchased with His own blood?

The next time you are tempted to complain about the sacrifices you make in your walk and service for the Lord, stop and ask yourself if that is the mentality of the virtuous woman. Seek out opportunities to serve God and His people instead of looking for excuses why you can't or shouldn't serve.

Verses 14, 15 – *“She is like the merchant ships, she brings her food from afar. She also rises while it is yet night, And provides food for her household, And a portion for her maidservants.” NKJV*

Remember, we are studying the virtues of a virtuous or excellent wife as described by God. We are emphasizing the spiritual lessons found in this description. The Bride of Christ will possess these virtues. If we want to be in that company of saints, we must allow the Spirit to work these same traits and virtues in us in this life.

One of man's most basic and essential needs is for food and nutrition. In her supplying this need for herself and her family, she is compared to a merchant's ship. Her diligence to administer her well prepared meals at the proper and needed time is also highlighted by God as a noteworthy trait.

To understand the spiritual lesson illustrated here for us we must understand the two comparisons of food and a merchant ship. First, let's look at what our spiritual food is. **John 4:34** – Jesus declared that His food or that which gave Him strength, life and health spiritually as a man was to do the will of the Father and to accomplish the work God had given Him to do. The same is true for us.

If we are going to be healthy spiritually, we must occupy ourselves with doing the will of God and with allowing Him to finish His work in us and through us. God's will and work are revealed by only one source, the Bible – **II Timothy 3:16, 17** – Therefore His Word is spiritual food for our spiritual health.

His Word is as essential to our spiritual growth and health as natural food is to our natural growth and health. Through His Word we understand His will and are equipped to perform it. Our spiritual maturity is directly related to our intake of the Word of God and our application of it to our daily life.

Is it any wonder why so many of God's people are spiritually emaciated? There is little or no intake of God's Word. Many are starving to death spiritually, because

they have no appetite for the revealed will of God.

1 Peter 2:1 – 3 – The milk of the Word will cause you to grow. ***1 Corinthians 3:1 – 4*** – The meat of God’s Word will make you strong. The Word has something for all stages of spiritual growth. The ability to handle the meat of the Word is acquired as you learn to take in the milk of the Word and allow it to develop spiritual muscles and teeth. The milk stage is good, necessary and healthy, but we need to grow up to the point that we can handle, understand and desire the deeper things of God.

The Word even has dessert. ***Psalm 119:103, 104***
In the natural some have a sweet tooth that just won’t let them leave sweets alone. We need to develop a spiritual sweet tooth that nothing can satisfy but the Word of God.

Jeremiah 15:16 – Those believers who will make up the company of the Bride of Christ know the necessity of spiritual food. They know the only food worth preparing, serving and eating is the Word of God that reveals the will and work of God. We need a revelation of the necessity of and satisfying ability of the Word of God.

Merchant Ship – With this analogy we see to what extent she is willing to go to prepare her spiritual food for herself, her family and those for whom she is responsible. It is one thing to grab a quick snack and another to sit down to a banquet. Equally, it is one thing to read the Bible and another thing to study it. It is one thing to listen to sermons and another to diligently seek out the message of Paul’s Gospel.

When it comes to preparing food for herself and her household, she is like a merchant ship filled to capacity with only the best that can be found. The merchant ship goes in search of the best and richest qualities of goods from all around the world. The merchant faces many dangers (pirates, storms, contrary

winds) and makes many sacrifices, but will return with his ship filled to capacity with quality goods. – *Ezekiel 27:17* – *21* Why does the merchant go to all that trouble? Because it is profitable.

The virtuous woman does this for herself and her family because it's necessary and it's profitable. She doesn't eat or feed her family just any old thing. She doesn't just reach for whatever is handy or easy. She searches for the best even if it involves spending time and energy to do it.

Some Christians travel quite a distance to go to Church when there are Churches right in their own neighborhood. Why? Because they feel there is a depth and a richness to the message available in certain places that is not being offered in just every place. That is not an arrogant way of thinking. It is simply the sad truth that not all Churches proclaim the whole counsel of God.

God admires those who are willing to go to great sacrifice to feed on sound doctrine. In South America there are those who travel 30 or 40 minutes on dirt roads in an ox cart just to hear the teaching of the Grace of God. There are those around the world who literally risk their lives to hear the Word of God expounded.

The Bride of Christ will be made up from every tongue, people and nation of those who have been willing to make the sacrifice of time and energy to take in the sound doctrine of the Word of God, no matter what the cost, because they understood it was worth the investment.

II Timothy 2:15, 16 – We are to be diligent to rightly divide the Word of Truth. It is so much easier to listen to worldly and empty chatter. It's on every Christian TV channel and Radio Station and in many pulpits. There are deep, precious truths that God wants His people to enjoy and that will make us spiritually

strong, healthy and prosperous. They are things that may not necessarily entertain, but that will sustain. **I Corinthians 2:9 – 12**

All through the Bible we are exhorted to search, desire, dig or do whatever is necessary to gather our spiritual food that will cause us to grow and be strong.

Psalm 19:9 – 11 **Proverbs 2:1 – 6**

To obtain such a profound knowledge of the will and work of God will cost you something. **Proverbs 23:23** – Those who will make up the company of the Bride of Christ will know the value of the Word of God and will give anything necessary in exchange for a revelation and practical application of that Word.

Most of God's people are willing to live off the spiritual equivalent of those free samples in the stores. It doesn't cost them anything to buy, prepare or eat. They hear a sermon here or there when it's convenient for them and they feel like they have fulfilled their Christian duty.

Then there are those that are so lazy, they not only do not go in search of the deep things of God, but when it's sitting right in front of them they are too lazy to put it to their mouth. - **Proverbs 19:24** There are some Christians that risk their lives in some parts of the world for the privilege of hearing the Word of God. Others have the opportunity freely given to them right under their nose to hear the precious truth of God's Word expounded and are too lazy to take advantage of it.

Still others exchange what little truth they do have for the pleasures of this world. They live a life of carnality that is the equivalent of spiritual bulimia. They take it in, but they don't allow it to be digested into their system. Without an obedience to the Word there is no spiritual nutrition received.

She rises early to give to her household – Are

you willing and ready to nourish your brother or sister by the Word of God? I find it very disturbing when believers tell me that they don't need to be faithful to the Lord in a local assembly. They can read their Bible and pray at home. They don't want to have to deal with all the hypocrisy, so they forsake the assembling of themselves together with God's people. They are so lazy and selfish, they don't rise at all to see that others are nourished and prepared for the day.

The faithful believer is like a merchant ship not just for their own good, but for the good of others. Are you willing to put forth the effort and sacrifice necessary so that others may be fed and built up in their spiritual life? The Lamb's wife, this virtuous, excellent wife, will be made up of those who possess such a willingness.

Ephesians 4:14 – 16, 29

Verse 16 – *“She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard.” NKJV*

It's no wonder the heart of her husband trusts in her. In this verse we see just how industrious and wise she is. She is a good administrator of business. She's not “just” a housewife. She's not content just to set back and be taken care of by her husband. She is industrious and takes initiative, but all in submission to her husband whose heart trusts in her.

The world looks at faithful believers and sees simple people without ambition. God looks at them and sees industrious, wise administrators of His grace.

She considers a field and buys it with her own earnings from selling her handmade cloths and clothing. She considers its value and potential and weighs them against what it will cost her. This property cost her a great deal of time and labor, but she deemed it worth it. The purpose of buying the land was to produce fruit. She

considered the abundant harvest and closed the deal.

The spiritual lessons found in this verse have to do with the fields or hearts that are to be considered and in which we are to invest our resources and labors for the purpose of bringing forth spiritual fruit, which is simply the life, blessings and character of Christ.

Luke 14:25 – 25 – Jesus gives a broader, more general application of this truth and applies it to our discipleship in general. However, we are to consider, count the cost of, the specific spiritual fields that are available to us for the purpose of having a harvest of spiritual fruit. After counting the cost, knowing that it will involve labor and sacrifice, and considering the value of the harvest, we are to buy the field.

The first field that we should consider and purchase with our sacrifice of time, energy and resources is that of our own heart. Do we take time to consider our own heart and mind and its potential of spiritual fruit?

Remember, when we talk about “buying” spiritual and eternal things in Christ, we are referring to the choices of exchanging certain things in order to be able to obtain the things that have eternal value. All that we have or ever will have we have by God’s grace. Yet when it comes to rewards and enjoying the fullness of His grace, God requires of us sacrifices and services of obedience.

Such a system of rewards for faithful service is still by God’s grace, His unmerited favor. His favor has given us the opportunity to serve Him and worship Him with acceptable sacrifices. His grace teaches us and enables us to render faithful service - **Philippians 2:12, 13**

Paul labored and sacrificed greatly for the sake of the Gospel and God’s people, yet it was all by grace, not legal obligation or self effort – **I Corinthians 15:10**

God's grace must always be received and yielded to before we can benefit from it.

Consider and buy your own heart that there might be a harvest of spiritual fruit – **John 15:1 – 8** – Abide means to stay close and live in communion with Him. To do that you will have to exchange or give up everything else that would hinder that close communion with the Lord. **Philippians 3:7, 8**

Jesus spoke of the need to be pruned by God's Word. The pruning of God's Word refers back to the sacrifices it takes to know His word and to get an understanding of His will and then to submit to it. "Buy the truth and sell it not." We use a phrase, "How much did that set you back?" Well, the word of God will "set" you back or "cut" you back – **Hebrews 4:12**

Are we willing to exchange the fulfilling of the desires of our own flesh in order to enjoy the superior value of the fruit of the Spirit? **Galatians 5:19 – 25**
Colossians 3:5 - 17

It is God who will produce the spiritual fruit in our life, but we must be willing to make the choices that will allow Him to bring it to pass. Those choices will lead to sacrifice and labor for His glory. The faithful believer will gladly pay the price for Christ to be seen in them. Remember it's an investment. There is a cost involved, but there is an eternal return on our investment. The greatest benefit is illustrated for us in **S.O.S. 4:16**. It is a heart full of the fruit of the Spirit that attracts the attention and intimate communion of the Bridegroom.

Next, we need to understand that God places us in situations and brings people into our paths in order that we might consider the fields of the hearts of those around us and buy them for His glory that there might be spiritual fruit in their lives.

Many times we complain about our situation and

about the people with which we have been surrounded. It's easy for us to look across the fence and to think that the grass looks greener over there. "If I were just over in that field, that circumstance, I could really do something for God."

Satan is quick to blind us to the fields in which God has placed us and desires that we consider. God does deliver us from certain situations and people, but before you runaway in despair, consider your present field and the people around you and buy them for Christ. Invest time and energy, labor in their lives in order to promote spiritual fruit in their lives.

Romans 1:13 – 15 – What did it cost Paul to minister to the Romans? Ultimately, his life. What fields are available to you? Are you willing to buy them. Mothers are you buying up the hearts of your children for Christ? What about your neighbors, co-workers and those who attend your local assembly? Are you willing to invest time and energy in the lives of those that God has placed around you?

It will change how you think of the people around you and how you deal with them. If you see them as an investment for eternity, you will have much more patience with them and be willing to invest time and energy with them without complaining. **Hebrews 10:24, 25** – Those who will make up the Bride of Christ will not see others as irritants, but investments.

Verse 17 – *"She girds herself with strength, And strengthens her arms."* NKJV

This verse gives us the secret of how this virtuous woman is able to do all that she does. After reading this description of God's idea of the ideal women, or in the spiritual application, God's idea of the ideal Christian that will be a part of the company known as the Lamb's wife,

you might get the impression that she is a “super woman.”

She is not “super human.” She simply avails herself to the proper tools and uses them wisely. In this case the secret of her strength is simply a girdle or back support.

Strength means “fortress, power, stronghold.” The thought behind the word strength is something that endures or holds up. This young lady is able to do all that she does because she has a support that wraps around her to give her strength to do what she would not be able to do without it.

Being a faithful, overcoming Christian is not a matter of being “super human.” Too many look at the faithfulness, strength, works, service and sacrifice of faithful saints and say, “I can’t be like that.” “I’m not strong enough.” To do the works of righteousness you must gird yourself with strength.

Psalm 18:31, 32 Says that God arms me with strength. The word means to “arm, or gird or bind up.” Being a faithful, fruitful believer is not a matter of being strong in yourself, but in availing yourself to the girdle of strength that the Almighty God has provided. When you put on this girdle of strength, it will make your way, your life, perfect or complete and full.

So what is it that God has provided for His people to have strength to endure and to do the work He has for them to do? What is it that enables us to hold up under any stress or strain and yet remain faithful to do the things that will bring glory to our espoused Husband?

Psalm 119:28 – the Psalmist was weighted down from heaviness and grief and was at a point where he didn’t have strength to continue on in the ways of the Lord. He cries out for the strength to go on. He knew that his strength came from the Word of God.

Ephesians 6:10 – 17 – It is the truth of God’s Word that supports us and gives us strength to carry on, whether in war or work. When you begin to wrap yourself in the truth that is found in God’s Word, you will find a strength that enables you to go beyond your natural strength.

In The Natural – the girdle or belt in ancient times was used for three main purposes. 1) Protection from injury from internal weakness in the back or ruptured stomach muscles. We still use such supports today. 2) Restraint from external hindrances when at work or war. (flowing robes). 3) As armor to protect from being wounded by the enemy in the sensitive stomach area.

God’s Word will strengthen us and protect us in a spiritual sense in these three areas if we will wrap ourselves in His Word by faith. To gird yourself with Truth is to know God’s Word, believe it and apply it to your life.

1) **Internal Weakness** – I suffer from a weak back and at one time I also suffered from a rupture in the stomach muscle. Those weaknesses kept me from being able to do any physical work. The only problem was, I needed to make a living and at one time that involved physical labor. Everyday I had to gird myself with supports for my back and stomach that gave me strength and support to do what I would not have been able to do otherwise.

As a pastor, when encouraging individual believers to a live a life of godliness and service that honors the Lord, I often hear the excuse, “I would like to, but I can’t.” “You don’t know my weaknesses.” “I’m not strong like so and so.”

We all have the same internal weakness – **Romans 7:15 – 24** – The internal weakness of the flesh would keep

us all from living an overcoming life. But if we gird ourselves with Truth, we will find strength that overrides and overpowers the weakness of the flesh. **Galatians 2:20** – God’s Truth tells me that I have received the very life of Christ within me. God’s Truth tells me I’m a new creature in Christ and that I no longer have to be a slave to sin, but have been given liberty to serve God in righteousness.

Psalm 119:9 – 11 – Don’t be limited by the weakness of your flesh. Walk in the power of knowing the Truth. Hide in your heart the things that God has revealed to be pleasing to Him as well as the things that displease Him and then gird yourself with the Truth that the Christ in you is able to make you pleasing to God. *“It is God that works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”*

All God’s people have the same weakness in the flesh. Don’t make the mistake of thinking that spiritual saints are somehow naturally stronger than carnal saints. The difference between being spiritual and being carnal is a matter of girding or not girding yourself with Truth. Know, believe and apply God’s Truth to your life and you will be spiritually strong and be able to faithfully endure in all that God has called you to do.

2) **Outward Hindrances** – flowing robes. There was nothing sinful or wrong about the flowing robes worn by individuals in Bible times. In fact they were very beneficial and worn for comfort. However, when it came time to do work or go to war, they became a hindrance. A sash or belt was used to hold them in a proper place out of the way.

The Truth of God’s Word puts everything in our life into its proper place and perspective so that nothing is allowed to hinder us from doing or being what He has

called us to do or be.

II Timothy 2:3, 4 – We must not be entangled with things that will hinder us from being victorious in our spiritual life. Like the flowing robes of ancient times in a hot, arid climate, there are things that we need and enjoy in this life that are not in and of themselves sinful. In fact they are blessings and comforts from God. Houses, clothing, wealth, family, friends are just a few of such blessings.

But if these things are allowed to keep us from serving the Lord and doing His will, they become dangerous and self-destructive. Knowing the Truth and applying it to every area of your life will keep everything in its proper place.

Recreation, for example is good, healthful and relaxing unless it keeps you from exercising in godliness. You are not girded with strength if recreation keeps you from assembling yourself with God's people to worship God and minister to one another. Wealth is good and helpful unless it keeps you from being rich toward God. Then it becomes an evil. Family is a wonderful blessing unless in pleasing them, you displease God. If you value your fellowship with your family more than your fellowship with God, then you are going to suffer the loss of the blessings of close fellowship with the Lord.

Let God's Word put everything in your life in its proper place. **Matthew 6:24 – 34** – "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you.*"

3) **Armor** – As armor the girdle or the belt was very important. It was usually made of thick leather or metal. It protected from wounds to the belly. A wound to the midsection is usually fatal because of the very tender and vital organs found there.

In the Bible the bowels represent our affections

and emotions because of their tenderness and sensitivity. Satan loves to stab us where it hurts the most. He weakens us and drains our strength to serve and honor the Lord if he can cause us to fear or be anxious or to get our feelings hurt and become bitter.

The protection against such attacks from the enemy is found in girding yourself with strength. **Philippians 4:6, 7** - It is difficult to continue to worry and fret when you believe what God says about every circumstance in your life. “All things work together for good.” “Nothing can separate you from the love of God...” Wrap yourself in truth and it will protect you from the fatal darts of fear and anxiety.

Bitterness that results from emotional betrayal can be such a devastating, debilitating wound. – **Psalm 119:165** – Love the truth and nothing and no one will be able to cause you to stumble because of bitterness. Truth and a love for Truth will enable you to endure the abuse of the world, Satan and even from God’s own people and give you strength to honor God in every area of your life. It is impossible to be an overcoming Christian without a love for Truth.

She Makes Her Arm Strong – Do you know how she made her arms strong? By using them or exercising them. My Mom took in ironing when we were young. She did all the ironing for a local dry cleaners. Whenever we needed a jar opened, we took it to Mom. She was strong, because she constantly used her arms.

I Timothy 4:6 – 16 – Paul told Timothy of his need to be spiritually nourished, disciplined, exercised. It was necessary to give attendance to reading God’s Word and to meditate on its Truth. As you exercise your faith in the Word of God, your spiritual arm becomes strong and it enables you to do the work of the Lord effectively

and successfully.

Many wonder why they just can't seem to live an overcoming life. There just doesn't seem to be enough strength in them to overcome and live a godly, fruitful life. It doesn't take much investigation to discover that such believers are hearers of the Word, but not doers. They may enjoy hearing and reading the Word, but they never actually apply it to their life. They never exercise spiritually.

Example – When you read in *I Peter 1:6* to greatly rejoice though presently distressed by various trials, do you rejoice? When you read to cast your cares on the Lord in prayer, do you do it? How about the command not to forsake the assembling of yourself together and so much the more as you see the day approaching? Do you study to show yourself approved?

It may be difficult at first and you may even fail from time to time, but if it is your desire to be pleasing to the Lord and you look to Him for the will and the doing of His will, you will become stronger and stronger. *Hebrews 5:11 – 14* Spiritual maturity comes by the use or application of Truth.

Verses 18, 19 – *“She perceives that her merchandise is good, And her lamp does not go out by night. She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hand holds the spindle.” NKJV*

The sense of these verses is this; she knows the value of her merchandise. That is, she knows that it is top quality and that it is profitable. The reference to the lamp is probably not a reference to her working late but to the custom of leaving a light burning all night for several reasons. In those days, there was a custom of leaving at least one lamp burning all night. (McClintock & Strong) If a lamp went out it was a signal that someone had died in

that household. The lamp was also a security measure to let thieves know that the house was occupied. A house that didn't have a lamp burning during the night could also be a sign of poverty. They simply didn't have the means to buy oil. The virtuous woman has evidence of her successfulness. She has a lamp that doesn't go out at night because there is always sufficient to buy an abundance of oil.

Knowing the worth of her merchandise and seeing the evidence of it in the lamp, she willingly puts her hand to the distaff and spindle. These were the instruments used to make thread from raw material. It's long, tedious, exhausting work. Sometimes I'm sure the thought came to her, "am I really doing anything of significance?" "All I do is go round and round in circles." But then she would put things back into perspective by looking at the full picture and find new strength to continue on perceiving that her merchandise is good and her labor not in vain.

The spiritual lessons should be clear. God is looking for these same traits and perspectives in the lives of those believers who will make up the Bride of Christ.

Our Merchandise – The Gospel of Jesus Christ. We offer it without cost, but its worth is priceless. Let's look at the example the Apostle Paul who perceived the worth of his merchandise and tirelessly worked that others may have the opportunity to experience the power of the Gospel. **1 Thessalonians 2:1 – 13** – Paul tirelessly offered the Gospel to any and all who would received it. He didn't need a slick ad campaign. He didn't try to be a fast talking salesman using flattering words and deceitful tactics. He presented his merchandise by the power of the Holy Spirit and the living proof of his own godly lifestyle.

Paul uses words like, suffered, labor and toil when

referring to his ministry to the Lord and his fellow man. There was much time, energy and effort put forth in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. At times it was as tedious, mundane, and unnoticed as a woman sitting at the distaff and spindle making thread. There were very few if any moments of glamour in Paul's ministry. Why then did he labor and suffer so? Because he knew the worth of his merchandise. He knew his message to be profitable to him and to all who would receive it.

Romans 1:14 – 17 – Know the value you of your message. Don't be ashamed of the Gospel. It is the power of God to save lost humanity and to give those who receive it life abundant and eternal. Some may ridicule you and say that you are insignificant and have nothing to add to society, but if you live for Christ and proclaim His Gospel, you are making available the greatest merchandise ever offered the human race.

The value of Paul's Gospel is immeasurable. - **Romans 2:16** It's important to know the standard by which you are going to be judged. Unbelievers will be judged before the Great White Throne Judgment and believers will be judged before the judgment seat of Christ, but all according to the Gospel that was fully revealed to the Apostle Paul. This is why sound doctrine is so important. The whole counsel of God is our merchandise, not just parts of it. **II Timothy 3:16, 17**

Each of us have our own ministry. We each have our responsibilities to proclaim this precious message of God's grace and to be a living example of its worth and power. – **I Peter 4:10, 11**

There is so much merchandise being peddled out there today in the form of ideas, philosophies, religions and lifestyles. We are told that we just can live without what certain peddlers have to offer. How can we know

and let others know that our message is different, good, right and lasting?

The Lamp That Doesn't Go Out In The Night –

This speaks to me of a Spirit-filled life that constantly enjoys the benefits of the Gospel even in times of dark trials. The word translated “perceives” or “senses” means “tasted.” She knows the worth of her merchandise by experience and invites others to do the same. She and her family wear what she offers to others to put on.

Much reproach has been brought to the Gospel because some who offer it do not have the light of a godly testimony in their own life. I have often heard about someone who while drunk in a bar testifies to someone else about Jesus. I have heard individuals talk about how wonderful that is. From time to time someone may even get saved as a result of being pointed to Christ by a drunk. I'm thankful to God that He seeks and saves all who are His. Thank God our salvation is not dependent on the instrument that presents to us the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God is Sovereign and overrules. Thank God He can even speak through a donkey when necessary, but that is not God's ordained way. He wants us to perceive, taste for ourselves the goodness of the Gospel that saves us and transforms us into the image of Jesus Christ. The light of a personal testimony goes a long way in pointing others to Christ - **Psalm 34:8** **Matthew 5:14 – 16**

Romans 14:17 – When you tell others about the kingdom of God, do they see the reality or light of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit?

Distaff and Spindle – knowing the worth of your message, you will willingly make the sacrifices necessary to proclaim and promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 15:58 – Sometimes it may seem like a hard, wasted, and useless life in the world's eyes,

but we know that our labor is not in vain and will produce eternal wealth. A separated life of faithfulness to the Lord may sometimes seem mundane and insignificant like going around on a spindle, but there is a big difference between a waste and an investment. **Galatians 6:9**

Know the worth of the message of God's grace. Let your life shine as a testimony of its worth and then be willing to render whatever labor of love necessary for the sake of the Gospel knowing the present and eternal profit of such a labor of love.

Verse 20 – *“She extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.” NKJV*

We have already seen that this lady is prosperous. As the description continues, we will see more evidence of her wealth, prosperity and influence. But in the midst of the description of her wealth we see this description of her sensitivity and generosity towards those who are in need.

Jesus is looking for these traits in those who will make up His bridal company of believers. What could be more Christ-like that to minister to the needs of others? Jesus looked on us, lost in our sin, and had pity on us and not only reached out, but came down to minister to our need. Over and over Jesus looked at the multitudes during His earthly ministry and had compassion on them. **II Corinthians 8:9** No wonder He desires this trait in the lives of those who will sit together with Him in His throne.

We need to be sensitive to both the material and spiritual needs of others. Many of God's people are so insensitive and uncaring to the needs of others. Many freely receive God's abundant blessings, both spiritual and material, and selfishly enjoy them without concern for the needs of those around them. The Lord finds such

selfishness and insensitivity very unattractive.

Material Needs – I Timothy 6:17 – 19 – God gives riches to enjoy and to share. It's not a self-exalting or self-gratifying kind of giving. Nor is it an obligatory, forced giving. This virtue of generosity is a genuine joy in being able to have a part in being God's instrument to minister to the needs of others. **II Corinthians 9:6 – 8** – God will supply our material needs, and usually abundantly, but the promised harvest here is not, give a little money now so God can give you a big amount of money later. The harvest is the joy of serving the Lord and the praise and glory that will abound to His glory. God will reward such generosity with the generous position of sitting with Christ in His throne. **Proverbs 11:24, 25**

Generosity is not to be confused with foolishness and irresponsibility. We need to be sensitive to God's direction for those who are truly in need and those who God would have us to help. I have discovered that it is not always helpful to give material support to those who have never learned to honor the Lord with what little they have. A wise farmer doesn't just throw his seed anywhere and everywhere, but on selected and proper soil. We must be directed by the Spirit in our giving, but we need to let the Spirit work these virtues of sensitivity and generosity in our hearts.

There have been times when I have been led to give when I knew good and well that it was going to be used unwisely, but felt impressed by the Spirit to give it anyway. I gave it as unto the Lord and left the results to God. However, I have found that to be the exception rather than the rule.

Our primary responsibility is to the household of faith and especially to those who walk in the fear of the

Lord. *Galatians 6:9, 10* That doesn't mean that God will never lead you to give to supply the material needs of the unsaved or carnal, our priority are those who fear the Lord. Let us do good to all, but especially to those of the household of faith.

Spiritual Needs – The greatest wealth we have is the treasure of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The greatest most tragic poverty found in the human race is that of spiritual poverty, an ignorance of God and His ways.

Freely we have received of the riches of Christ, freely we are to give to others. We have been given much. To whom much is given, much is required. We need to generously extend our hand and reach out to the spiritually poor and needy. *Colossians 1:27 – 29*

We need to be sensitive to the spiritual needs of those around us. We need a burden for the lost and for God's people who continue to live in the poverty of their carnality.

Our generosity in spiritual things is often rejected by those who need it most. Our generosity in material things is sought after, expected and demanded. There are those who think the primary responsibility of the Church is to pay their rent and utilities. When I tell them we don't have the resources to dedicate to that, I get responses like, "You people shouldn't even call yourself a Church."

However, we should not lose sight of the value of what we have to offer. No matter how many times it's rejected we need to continue to generously share the riches of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with all to whom the Lord gives us opportunity to witness. We should never lose sight of man's real poverty, his spiritual poverty. We should be generous in our efforts to offer them the wealth of God's grace of which we ourselves have received and with which we have been enriched. *Revelation 22:17* –

this is a trait of the Bride of Christ.

Verse 21 – *“She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is clothed with scarlet.”*
NKJV

She is not afraid of the long, harsh winter that is coming because she and her family are prepared. They are clothed in the deep, warm color of scarlet that will protect them. Her prosperity has given her the ability to be prepared and protected from the snow of winter.

Her confidence in facing the coming snow that comes from her preparedness brings to my mind the confidence that is found in the lives of overcoming saints.

First, concerning the coming winter of God’s wrath. Those who will sit with Christ as His queen will not be those who are constantly afraid of His wrath. Many Christians live in constant fear of ultimately being condemned to the wrath of God. The color scarlet reminds us of the crimson blood of Christ that was shed on the cross and that covers us and protects us from the wrath to come. ***1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10*** ***Romans 5:9***

Secondly, the overcoming saint is able to face each dark trial with confidence and boldness knowing that they are under the protection of their Good Shepherd. They prepare for coming trials by putting on the armor of God and walking in righteousness. They do not live in constant fear and anxiety, but by preparing today, by living by faith, they will be ready for whatever tomorrow will bring. ***Psalm 91:1, 2*** – “secret place” = “covering” Spanish = “overcoat.” ***Psalm 118:6*** – I will not fear. I’m under the overcoat of God. ***Romans 8:28, 31***

Verses 22 – 25 – *“She makes tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, and*

supplies sashes for the merchants. Strength and honor are her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come.”
NKJV

Once again her wealth is revealed to us in this description. We also are made to realize the power and influence of her husband who is a leader in the community.

In the gates – in those days, public and civic business was literally conducted in the entryway of the gates to the city. To be known in the gates was to be known in the city as an important leader of the people. The virtuous woman does nothing to bring reproach to her husband’s reputation, but rather she enhances and adorns her husband’s glory by the quality of her merchandise that is sought out by the merchants and by her conduct and the manner in which she dresses.

We are told that she dresses in fine linen and purple. These are the garments of the wealthy and of royalty. We already know that this woman is not arrogant and snooty about her wealth or position, but rather is humble and generous. Yet, she takes care to dress appropriately for whose wife she is. It would be inappropriate for her, being the wife of an important man in the city, to dress in gunnysacks. That would reflect poorly on her well-known husband. Clothes do not make the person, but they can reflect circumstances and/or attitude. Without becoming a clothesline preacher, that’s a good practical lesson for our own day and age.

Example – It would be inappropriate for Mrs. Laura Bush (First Lady of US in 2004) to show up in public to greet other Heads of State and their wives in a house coat and curlers in her hair. That would demonstrate a complete disregard for her husband as well as for those that she would be greeting.

The virtuous woman dresses appropriately for who she is and for whose wife she is. So, guys, next time your wife spends a lot of money on some nice clothes, don't get angry, take it as a compliment that she respects your reputation as being an important person so much that she refuses to tarnish your reputation by dressing poorly.

Seriously, there are some very important spiritual lessons for us who desire to attain to the group of believers that will make up the Bride of Christ.

We need a fresh revelation of who our Espoused Husband is. *Colossians 1:15 – 19* – He's influential and important. Because of God's grace we have been identified with this Great Man and have been elevated to a place of wealth and power with Him - *Ephesians 2:4 – 7* We didn't deserve this place, but now that we have been given it, the least we can do is desire to always bring Him glory and never reproach.

The scriptural analogy of clothes in the Bible speaks of our outward testimony that is readily seen by those around us. God sees the heart and knows who are His children and who are not. He sees the heart of His dear children and knows whether it is full of carnality or the fear of the Lord. But those around us can only make judgments based on what they see demonstrated of our spiritual character.

So in order not to bring reproach to our Beloved, we should make sure that what others see and hear in our lives reflects well on Jesus Christ. We are not left to interpret the symbols of purple and fine linen for the description itself passes from the realm of the literal clothing to the realm of the spiritual clothing or spiritual character in **verse 25**.

Strength – I believe this corresponds to the wealth and royalty of purple. There is nothing that brings greater

reproach to the Lord of lords and King of kings than weak Christians who are constantly overcome by their trials, needs and circumstances. **Romans 5:17** – The primary understanding of this passage in Romans is most likely a reference to our eternal life that every believer enjoys, but I believe that it is consistent with Scripture to make the application that we are to reign in strength and victory right now in this life. **II Corinthians 2:14 – 16**

Too many of God's people are so easily overwhelmed by the needs, trials, injustices suffered or by their situations. They murmur and complain. They become unfaithful and unreliable in their service and worship of God. It's almost as if they have forgotten who their Espoused Husband is. Spiritually speaking they go around town in the curlers and housecoat of self-pity and despair rather than the regal attire of the purple of royal strength and wealth.

Ephesians 3:14 – 21 – When we allow the Holy Spirit to strengthen our inner man by the riches of Christ's glory, we will not be overcome with despair and murmuring and complaining, but rather we will be victorious in every situation. - **Philippians 4:11 – 13**

Others will see the spiritual character of strength and confidence that makes us know that we will rejoice in the time to come. - **Proverbs 14:26** We find supernatural strength in resting in the truth of God's Word. - **Romans 8:28** – Knowing that all things work together for our good, why wouldn't we be strong and joyous no matter what our present circumstances may be?

Fine Linen – I believe this corresponds with honor. Honor speaks of that which is ornate or ornamental and dignified. Fine line in the Bible speaks of righteousness either provisional or practical. Every child of God has been made the righteousness of God in Christ,

but not every Christian daily walks in the practice of that which is right in God's sight.

In this case the fine linen would speak of the daily practical righteousness of overcoming saints. Righteous living is becoming for a child of God. Carnality in the life of a believer is like putting on old, torn, stained, smelly, discarded rags. Are such rags on a Queen appropriate?

Ephesians 4:20 – 32

Any child of God can and should live a life of daily, practical righteousness just as any wealthy person has the means and resources to wear fine linen. Putting on spiritual clothing is a question of choosing to honor your Beloved with the proper spiritual character that is demonstrated by your outward testimony or to choose laziness and disregard for how your behavior reflects on you Lord.

Proverbs 21:21 – If you follow or desire to live righteously, being led of the Spirit, you will find righteousness and with it abundant life and honor both for yourself and for the Lord Jesus Christ. **Revelation 19:7, 8**

The virtuous woman does these things, not because her husband demands them of her as if she were a slave, but out of love and respect for him in loving response to His love and care for her.

Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you sufficiently appreciate Who He is? Then adorn yourself with the spiritual clothing of an appropriate outward testimony. Dress yourself with the purple of spiritual strength and the ornate fine linen of practical righteousness.

Verse 26 – *“She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness.” NKJV*

Wisdom and kindness flow from the mouth of

overcoming saints. The words of spiritual saints are very distinct from those of carnal saints. It is as distinct as one accent is from another. In the natural, many times you can determine where someone lives by their accent. It is the same in the spiritual realm. Our words betray whether we walk according to the Spirit or according to the flesh.

**The Flesh – Opposite of wisdom and kindness-
James 3:2 – 18** – When our tongue is controlled by the flesh, the imperfect man, it is full of hatred and bitterness and selfishness. The flesh uses the tongue to defend and justify itself at any cost. Usually that cost is at the expense of those around us.

When the tongue is under the control of the New Man, the Perfect Man, it becomes an instrument of wisdom, kindness and grace. - **Colossians 4:4, 5** – Our speech must be seasoned with grace, that which is for another’s benefit and good whether it is merited or not.

Speaking with grace doesn’t always mean that your words will be soft and pleasant. Paul said some pretty tough things to the Corinthians but it was seasoned with grace because he spoke to them for their good and benefit and not for his own personal defense or in carnal retaliation. Words of correction can be words of wisdom and kindness when seasoned with grace.

Paul spoke some tender things to the Thessalonians but they were seasoned with grace because they were not words of carnal flattery used to promote his own ambitions, but rather were spoken to encourage and direct them in path of righteousness.

Ask yourself, “do my words cause strife or unity?” “Do my words bring healing or hurt?” “Do my words promote the well-being of others or are they used to promote, defend and justify self?”

I believe that this is an important characteristic of

those who will make up the Bride of Christ and yet many of God's people give little thought to what they say and how they say it.

I'm not talking about never being lighthearted or joking around. Such lightheartedness can be seasoned with grace as well since "*a merry heart doeth good like a medicine.*" **Proverbs 17:22** If I can tell you a good clean joke and make you laugh, I've done you some good.

But I am talking about being purposeful with our words. Purpose to use your words for the good of others and not for their hurt and destruction. Purpose to promote their good and not your own with what you say.

This is the most difficult when someone has hurt you or used their words to try to bring you harm. Nevertheless, the overcoming saint will still have a mouth that is full of wisdom and kindness even under such difficult circumstances. **Ephesians 4:29**

Verse 27 – "*She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.*" NKJV

Here we have described two of the virtues that are extremely dominant in the life of the overcoming saint, faithfulness and diligence. These traits are especially seen in connection with her family's needs.

So many of God's people have never learned the value of being faithful and diligent in their service to God and His people. The vast majority serve and worship the Lord when it is convenient. Too many do not make it a priority to minister to the needs of the other members of the family of God.

Hebrews 10:24, 25 – Being faithful to assemble yourself together for the good of others is an attractive quality to the Lord. Don't eat the bread of idleness when it comes to diligently gathering together with God's people to worship the Lord and minister to your brothers

and sisters in Christ.

1 Peter 4:10, 11 – Whatever talent, ability, ministry or opportunity the Lord has given you to serve Him and minister to others, be diligent to do it. Be reliable, dependable and faithful.

If you are unfaithful to exercise the ministry God has given you, God will find someone to use as His instrument to minister to His people. However, God graciously gives you the opportunity to be used of Him for His glory. Don't take that opportunity for granted and don't waste it and lose your reward.

If this virtuous woman regularly got out of bed only when she felt like it to fix the meals, do the laundry and make the clothes, her family would cease to function. Stop and ask yourself, if everyone were like you in their Church attendance, giving and participation in the ministry of this assembly, what kind of condition would this Church be in?

Some of you will honestly be able to say that this Church would actually be better off than it is already. Others would have to honestly answer that the Church doors would have to be closed and the building sold. **1 Thessalonians 2:7 – 12** – May we have the heart of Paul and of the virtuous woman.

Galatians 5:13 –If you live for yourself, you will be a slave to the deceitful lust of the flesh. If you will learn to live for others and diligently and faithfully minister to their needs, you will enjoy the true liberty that produces joy, peace, contentment and prosperity.

Ephesians 5:15 – 21 – Redeem the time and forsake the bread of idleness. Buy up the opportunities to be a part of what God is doing for eternity.

Verses 28 – 31 – *“Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: “Many*

daughters have done well, but you excel them all." Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates." NKJV

We have seen that this woman's life is full of hard work and selfless sacrifice even though she and her husband are people of power and wealth in the city. This is also the case in the lives of those that she represents, the believers that will make up the Bride of Christ.

One who is faithful to the Lord, desiring to please Him in all things, will encounter hard work and sacrifice. There will be times of suffering as the enemy comes to discourage us from continuing on. But do not make the mistake of thinking that such a life is an unrewarding or unfulfilling life. Love has its reward. To serve the Lord with all your heart, out of love for Him is not a vain and empty life.

There are many rewards in this life and in eternity for serving the Lord, motivated by love, but the two greatest are recorded here in this description of the Virtuous Woman. The praise of her children and the supreme reward, the praise of her husband. As a result of her Husband's praise, she is given the fruit of her hands. There is coming a glorious harvest for all who have faithfully labored in loving service to the Lord.

Her Children – I Thessalonians 2:7 – 12 – Paul labored on behalf of the Thessalonians with much hardship and with great care and love. Paul's description of his ministry to these saints sounds much like the description of the virtuous woman. The faithful do have spiritual children that they have led to the Lord or encouraged and instructed in the things of the Lord.

In the natural, many times the work and sacrifice

of a mother goes unnoticed and unappreciated until the children reach maturity. Some then understand and fully appreciate all that the mother did for their benefit and thank them and praise them for being such a good mother.

At times it may seem that no one notices or cares that you are faithful to serve the Lord and His people, but don't despair. The praise of those who have been advanced in their spiritual life because of your faithfulness will come. Sometimes it comes in this life. But it will certainly be made manifest in eternity.

There have been those who have helped to form my spiritual life that I have had opportunity to thank in this life. Some helped me by simply being an example of faithfulness. Others have had more direct input in my life by teaching me sound doctrine or giving me spiritual counsel.

There have been others that died before I came to a place in my spiritual growth that I could recognize their contribution to my spiritual life. My life is partly a product of their ministry and life. I believe I will have opportunity in heaven to thank them for their service of love to the Lord and to me.

There is no greater reward for a loving parent than to see their children succeed. Their success is their parent's success. *Philippians 4:1* - Paul calls the Philippian saints, "my joy and crown." *III John 1:3, 4*

I hope you have a desire to have many spiritual children, individuals that you influence to spiritual growth and maturity. Those that you influence for God's glory will praise you when they enter into their reward.

The Praise Of Her Husband – This is worth everything to her. Some of us remember, when we were first engaged, the joy there was in knowing that you were pleasing to the one you loved. Some of us also remember

the misery in finding out that we had hurt the one we loved, even if it was unintentional.

In our relationship with the Lord there needs to be that continual freshness that causes us always to want to please Him and never displease Him. The praise of our Beloved makes all the labor and sacrifice well worth it. It is this mutual love, Jesus' for us and ours for Jesus, which makes our service of love so rewarding.

Most people today do not understand this kind of love and commitment and its reward. The greatest reward of a lifelong marriage is not all the things that are accumulated, but the fellowship and companionship of your spouse who pleases you and who finds pleasure in you.

Example – I was always impressed with the relationship between my Grandma and Grandpa Crook. If there was ever a woman whom I would not hesitate to describe as a virtuous woman as described here in **Proverbs 31** it would be my Grandma Crook. They truly delighted in one another their whole married life, but even more so as they got older.

When Grandpa died, something my Grandma said made me understand even more the depth of their love and appreciation for one another. I told her that I was praying for her and that I could not even begin to imagine how hard it must be for her having lost her companion of over 60 years since I had never lost a mate. Grandma said, “even those who have lost a mate cannot understand my loss because their spouse was not like mine.” *Song Of Solomon 5:9 - 16*

The Fear Of The Lord – Many say they don't have what it takes to be the Bride of Christ. They claim no special talents or beauty or abilities. But notice what the virtuous woman's husband praises. Not charm or

beauty, but the fear of the Lord. It is a heart that stands in awe of Him and desires always to please Him and never to displease Him that attracts the praise of the Lord Jesus Christ. **1 Samuel 16:6, 7 / 13:14**

I can reap the reward of the praise of the Son of God if I will simply stand in awe of Him and all that His love has provided for me and let Him do His eternal work in my life. **Isaiah 66:1, 2** – I can tremble at His Word, therefore I can know and experience the gracious look of the fullness of the love of Christ.

There is no greater reward than to know that the Lord of lords and King of kings finds you special and unique. To some extent this is certainly true of every believer, but among the saved there are those who bring Him greater pleasure than others. There are those among believers who displease Him. Those who live after the flesh cannot please Him. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

Many have done well; all who are saved, but “you excel them all” - **Song Of Solomon 6:4 – 10** There will be many believers, but there will be a unique group from among them that will make up the Lamb’s Wife. The provision is for all. The qualification is that we live in the fear of the Lord that we may be found worthy of His praise.

Fruit Of Her Hands, Praise Of Her Works – When you live your life to glorify the Lord, though it is an unselfish life, you will be abundantly rewarded for you will share in your Beloved’s glory. **Roman 8:16 – 18** – If we are willing to identify with Him and suffer rejection and persecution now for doing His will, we are promised to be made joint heirs with Christ in eternity.

What a glorious day that will be when the faithful enter into the fruit of their hands and their works praise

them. The supreme reward will be when we hear those priceless words of praise from the lips of our Lord, well done.

*Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." NKJV **Revelation 19:7 – 9***

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