

Wednesday, July 5th, Proverbs 31:10-15

A Virtuous Woman

The woman described is an example of a godly woman written in ancient times and a very different culture. The expectation is not to be her in matching task for task but rather to emulate the blessing she is to those around her. So we will try to look at why she does certain things, who she is serving and how this might look in our lives. Although the woman described to King Lemuel by his mother is the type of wife he is to look for, the example and the priorities described are for every child of God to follow.

We should address the obvious controversy of the world's values verses God's values. The idea of serving one another, i.e. putting others ahead of yourself being more concerned about their advancement than your own, is a misnomer among what the world would consider success in today's modern thinking. Let's guard our thinking from being blemished by the values of the world and popular acceptance.

Pr 31:10 An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.

she is rare (v.10)

Rare: especially valued for its uncommonness -- WordWeb

she is valuable (v.10)

Valuable: having worth, merit or value -- WordWeb

To find something requires searching for it which means you have to look. An excellent wife is uncommon. She is not the 'norm', the 'status quo'. Her character is excellent, meaning she is virtuous. **What does it mean to have virtue?** It is having the quality of doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong. She is valuable, her worth far above jewels. Rather, we could say she is invaluable - no amount of precious stones are equal to her worth. Realize, her excellence and worth are not from outward appearance or accomplishments, but from within. The actions and evidence stem from a heart that is rare and valuable.

Pr 19:14 House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.

Pr 12:4 An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who shames [him] is as rottenness in his bones.

Ru 3:11 "And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.

1Ti 2:9-10 Likewise, [I want] women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; 10 but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.

A virtuous woman is a woman of resolution, who, having espoused good principles, is firm and steady to them, and will not be frightened with winds and clouds from any part of her duty. Matthew Henry's Commentary

Ec 7:28 which I am still seeking but have not found. I have found one man among a thousand, but I have not found a woman among all these.

Pr 8:11 "For wisdom is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her.

Pr 20:15 There is gold, and an abundance of jewels; but the lips of knowledge are a more precious thing.

In Exodus 18:21 the same word for virtue is used to describe able men: they fear God, they are men of truth and hate dishonest gain.

Pr 31:11 The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.

she is trustworthy (v.11)

Trustworthy: taking responsibility for one's conduct and obligations -- WordWeb

Someone who is unpredictable in behavior is the opposite of this woman. *Does your husband or those closest to you have confidence in the way you will respond or react to others? Or, do they fear embarrassment, having to 'clean up' or apologize for you?*

The KJV of this verse says 'he shall have no need of spoil'. Think about the resources provided by your husband. *Are you careful with managing so that your household is cared for with what you have? Do you waste? Is he made to constantly feel there is not enough?*

1Pe 3:1-6 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any [of them] are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3 And let not your adornment be [merely] external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but [let it be] the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands.

Pr 31:12 She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

she is a benefit (v.12)

Benefit: to aid or promote well-being -- WordWeb

Her general character is to look out for her husband's benefit, the goodness she shows is not merely impulsive, rather it is part of her character and can be counted on. Think about the importance of maintaining your husband's honor and reputation. *Have you been around woman who only complain about their husband or their home?*

Read about the discernment Abigail shows regarding her husband Nabal in 1 Samuel 25.

Note that the good shown towards a husband is not dependent on his actions but rather on her character and it continues throughout her life. It is not seasonal, not based upon how she is feeling but is sincere and constant.

Pr 31:13 She looks for wool and flax, and works with her hands in delight.

she is a hard worker (v.13)

Hard worker: someone who works as hard as a slave; striver -- WordWeb

She is pleased to find things to do to keep busy providing what is necessary for her family. It was common to have servants in her culture, she sought out the materials needed to keep those under her charge busy also. The implication seems to be the importance of working as opposed to idleness.

This verse also says something about her attitude: she works with her hands in delight!

Delight: a feeling of extreme pleasure or satisfaction -- WordWeb

Tit 2:5 [to be] sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.

1Ti 5:10 *having a reputation for good works; [and] if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, [and] if she has devoted herself to every good work.*

2Th 3:11 *For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.*

Pr 31:14 *She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar.*

she is industrious (v.14)

Industrious: characterized by hard work and perseverance; energetic -- WordWeb

She is occupied with finding what she needs for her home even when it means securing it from afar. Perhaps in our time we could apply this idea to meaning a willingness to be inconvenienced in order to get what our family needs. She may even trade some of her skilled wares for what she needs.

Pr 31:24 She makes linen garments and sells [them,] And supplies belts to the tradesmen.

Pr 31:15 *She rises also while it is still night, and gives food to her household, and portions to her maidens.*

she looks to the care of all in her home (v.15)

Care: feel concern or interest; guardianship; attention and management implying responsibility; forethought -- WordWeb

Does this mean we are to stay up all night? Of course not, rather there is a continuous diligence to provide for all, to stay on top of running her household. She is an energetic manager of the resources she has been given and uses them wisely so no one is in need.

Ro 12:11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

Think about preparing meals. How much time and planning does it take to provide healthy meals for your family? "She rises also while it is still night" - perhaps the example to us might be thinking ahead, having a plan in advance. She has been sure to provide the food her household and servants need for the day's work. Today, we might make lunches for our husband if married and our children of school age. In any case, her house seems to be well-ordered. Laziness is not in her vocabulary! And if needed, she stays up in order to complete the tasks that serve those she is caring for.

Wednesday, July 12th, Proverbs 31:16-22

A Virtuous Woman

Pr 31:16 She considers a field and buys it; from her earnings she plants a vineyard.

she is resourceful, she is a planner and increases what her husband provides

resourceful: capable, having the ability to ... --WordWeb

planner: having the will and intention to carry out an action --WordWeb

Look at the resources you have. Do you use them to the best of their ability, thinking how you might help to fulfill the needs and desires of your family? Are you using your talents and imagination to bless your home and others?

Pr 31:17 She girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong.

she is secure, she is strong (v.17)

secure: free from fear or doubt; easy in mind; not likely to fail or give way; sound --WordWeb

strong: mentally and physically

she is courageous (v.17)

You could begin to picture a woman bursting with muscles, able to lift a few hundred pounds ready to spear a tiger! However, looking at the many verses that use the same words for 'gird' and 'strength' gives us a picture of someone who is strong in the Lord: He is her strength, her confidence, her defense. All this is to God's majesty and praise!

Eph 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.

Eph 1:19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. [These are] in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

Pr 31:18 She senses that her gain is good; Her lamp does not go out at night.

she finds profit in her hard work (v.18)

she is diligent to work into the night to gain for her family (v.18)

Do you put time and effort into the things that benefit your household?

2Th 3:7-9 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we [kept] working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; 9 not because we do not have the right [to this,] but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example.

Are you disciplined in your time so that you can get the necessary things done? Are you careful to not be a burden to others because of your own lack of work? Are you an example for others to follow in managing your household?

We all have choices to make; we all have 24 hours in each day. Each of our circumstances is different, with varying needs to be met. We also have differing energy levels and some have health issues to account for. So this is not to be a comparison of one home to another but perhaps a personal examination of your own use of time, skill and energy before the Lord. Who are we serving when we feel exhausted—if ourselves, then let's change some priorities, if others, therefore God, let's be thankful for the opportunities, pray for energy and sleep peacefully!

Pr 31:19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hands grasp the spindle.

she is skillful (v.19)

skillfull: showing knowledge and aptitude; practiced; proficient

Picture a spinning wheel. Wool and flax was rolled and made into thread which then was transformed into clothing, tapestry and necessities for family and perhaps even selling. This was a skill needed then and the idea perhaps is our example was careful to learn this necessary skill and work at it. It was normal to have servants laboring in this task but here we see the example of doing whatever is needed, of even being an example. There was no task to demeaning or mundane for her to perform.

Today, we rarely hear of someone spinning wool. We all have differing skills. Maybe the emphasis for us should be on the willingness to work at something that may not be as exciting as we like, or something that may require a lot of tedious work. *Are there things that might be appreciated in your household or bless your household that you won't do because you simply don't enjoy them? Is there a skill you want to learn that would benefit your family? If you're led to make a change, how can you proceed?*

Pr 31:20 She extends her hand to the poor; And she stretches out her hands to the needy.

she helps others (v. 20)

Ac 20:35 "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Eph 4:28 Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have [something] to share with him who has need.

Heb 13:16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Ro 12:13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

On this verse, Adam Clarke's Commentary says 'she is truly charitable'. Her character is kind and sympathetic. She is generous and understanding towards others. It seems her success in industry is not just for her own household - to accumulate more - but rather to have goods to share with those in need. Look at the verbiage in verse 20. It says she 'extends' her hand and she 'stretches out her hands'. She looks for ways to serve others.

What are some ways we can reach out to those who need help?

Pr 31:21-22 She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet. 22 She makes coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

she is prepared (v.21)

she has regard for the appearance of her home and herself (v.22)

She does not dread harsh weather because she makes sure in advance that those she is responsible for have what they need. We hardly have snow here in the valley so what can we take from this suggestion? Perhaps thinking ahead, planning for the possibility of a change in circumstances would translate to being prepared. If we have children, a husband or others we care for, do they have what they need to go through the day? Think in terms of how you can serve to help your family succeed through the day.

What does your appearance reflect? What does your home's preparedness say about you? Are these things important? Why/Why not?

A Virtuous Woman

Pr 31:23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.

she is a benefit to her husband, he is respected in the city (v.23)

Pr 12:4 An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who shames [him] is as rottenness in his bones.

She is a loving wife, and feels for the respectability and honour of her husband. He is an elder among his people, and he sits as a magistrate in the gate. He is respected not only on account of the neatness and cleanliness of his person and dress, but because he is the husband of a woman who is justly held in universal esteem. And her complete management of household affairs gives him full leisure to devote himself to the civil interests of the community. Adam Clarke's Commentary

Observed and respected, not only for his own worth, but for his wife's sake. John Wesley's Notes on the Old and New Testaments

And so are her husband's robes; which make him noted, when he comes into the courts of judicature, and sits among the senators of the country: who call him a happy man in such a wife, as doth him honour, and eases him of all his cares, but only those of the public business: which her wisdom, diligence, and prudent management, give him leisure wholly to attend. PLWL Commentary

Pr 31:24 She makes linen garments and sells [them,] And supplies belts to the tradesmen.

she is industrious and uses her skills to help her family (v.24)

The Arabic gives a remarkable translation of this verse: "She maketh towels, (or tablecloths,) and sells them to the inhabitants of Basra, (a city in Mesopotamia,) and fine linens, and sells them to the Canaanites." Adam Clarke's Commentary

It seems that this woman is skilled in more than just one thing. She has learned to become accomplished in several areas that benefit her husband, household and those around her. Building proficiency took time and effort to learn these skills. It seems that the majority of her time and energy was used in blessing others.

To be industrious means to be characterized by hard work and perseverance. What do you think this looks like today in our culture?

Pr 31:25 Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future.

she is clothed in righteousness and has joyful confidence in her future (v. 25)

strength <oz> strength in various applications (force, security, majesty, praise)

dignity <hadar> magnificence such as ornament or splendor; beauty, comeliness, excellency, glorious, glory, goodly, honor, majesty

We are looking at the 'clothing' of her spirit. When we are careful to live for God there is no fear for the future.

Job 29:14 "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; My justice was like a robe and a turban.

Isa 61:10 I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Ro 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to [its] lusts.

Eph 4:24 And put on the new man, to which God has given life, in righteousness and a true and holy way of living.

1Ti 2:9-10 Likewise, [I want] women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; 10 but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.

What does your clothing look like? Does your wardrobe need a makeover?

Pr 31:26 She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

she speaks with wisdom and discernment (v. 26)

She speaks freely – in kindness and Truth.

teaching <torah> the law

Are you excited to speak of God's word? What is the subject of your speech? What is the tone and motivation of your speech? What is the basis of your speech?

In her tongue is the law of kindness.] This is the most distinguishing excellence of this woman. There are very few of those who are called managing women who are not lords over their husbands, tyrants over their servants, and insolent among their neighbours. But this woman, with all her eminence and excellence, was of a meek and quiet spirit. Blessed woman! Adam Clarke's Commentary

However busy she might be, she is not too occupied with her activities to neglect talking about God with others. I think this speaks of balance in life and the realization of what is truly important.

Is your conversation wise and gentle? Do your words come from the wisdom in God's word or your passions? Is your speech frivolous or wise?

Pr 31:8-9 Let your mouth be open for those who have no voice, in the cause of those who are ready for death. Let your mouth be open, judging rightly, and give right decisions in the cause of the poor and those in need.

Esther 8:3-6

Eph 4:29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouth, but only what is good for giving necessary teaching, and for grace to those who give ear.

Col 4:5 Be wise in your behaviour to those who are outside, making good use of the time.

Pr 12:18 There are some whose uncontrolled talk is like the wounds of a sword, but the tongue of the wise makes one well again.

Mal 2:6 True teaching was in his mouth, and no evil was seen on his lips: he was walking with me in peace and righteousness, turning numbers of people away from evil-doing. (God speaking of His covenant with Levi)

1Pe 3:1 Wives, be ruled by your husbands; so that even if some of them give no attention to the word, their hearts may be changed by the behaviour of their wives,

1Pe 3:4-5 But let them be those of the unseen man of the heart, the ever-shining ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great price in the eyes of God. And these were the

ornaments of the holy women of the past, whose hope was in God, being ruled by their husbands:

1Pe 3:8-9 Last of all, see that you are all in agreement; feeling for one another, loving one another like brothers, full of pity, without pride: Not giving back evil for evil, or curse for curse, but in place of cursing, blessing; because this is the purpose of God for you that you may have a heritage of blessing.

Pr 31:27 She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness.

She is a wise manager and an example of hard work (v. 27)

She studies those in her care; she is well aware of what is going on and what is needed. I think this may speak of the need to anticipate what will be needed and to act accordingly. She is not caught off guard with information that helps her provide. She is busy doing what is important. Frivolous things do not consume her time.

Do you study those in your household/those who are involved in your life? Are you intent on guiding them away from bad company or influences? As in the previous verse, are you ready to give instruction with wisdom? Is your example one of true diligence in serving the Lord in all you do?

1Ti 5:14 So it is my desire that the younger widows may be married and have children, controlling their families, and giving the Evil One no chance to say anything against them,

Tit 2:5 To be wise in mind, clean in heart, kind; working in their houses, living under the authority of their husbands; so that no evil may be said of the word of God.

Pr 14:1 Wisdom is building her house, but the foolish woman is pulling it down with her hands.

1Th 4:11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you; (Paul, in his exhortation to the church at Thessalonica)

2Th 3:6 Now we give you orders, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from all those whose behaviour is not well ordered and in harmony with the teaching which they had from us.

A Virtuous Woman

Pr 31:28-29 Her children rise up and bless her; her husband [also,] and he praises her, [saying:] 29 "Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all."

she is praised by her children and husband because they benefit from her good character, they are a testimony to her virtue (v. 28-29)

children <ben> this can be literal or figurative and may include grandchildren and all those within her sphere of influence

Because of the proverbial woman's diligence and example, her children have prospered. As they grow up they recognize the blessing of the tender, fastidious care from their mother. They have been taught the Truth and the benefits of hard and purposeful work. They have seen an example of tirelessly serving others for the Lord.

Caution: emulating the qualities in this example is not done for the praise of others; however, the result may end up in this blessing from God!

2Ti 1:5 Having in mind your true faith, which first was in your mother's mother Lois, and in your mother Eunice, and, I am certain, is now in you.

2Ti 3:15-17 And that from the time when you were a child, you have had knowledge of the holy Writings, which are able to make you wise to salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 Every holy Writing which comes from God is of profit for teaching, for training, for guiding, for education in righteousness: 17 So that the man of God may be complete, trained and made ready for every good work.

Her husband also recognizes the value of her hard work and diligence. It's interesting to think back about why this letter was written. Remember, it is to King Lemuel from his mother suggesting what to look for in a Godly woman. So not only are the qualities to look for listed but his wise mother includes what his proper response should be to this woman if he is blessed enough to find her. He is to be an encouragement to her in acknowledging her efforts and therefore supporting her endeavors.

Pr 31:29 "Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all."

Basically, 'there may be a lot of good women out there but you are the prize!' What an incredible testimony of her virtue.

Happy the children of such a mother; they will be living proofs of the care taken by her in their education, when she taught them to walk, by the paths of honour and virtue, to the mansions of rest and glory. Happy the husband of such a wife, who sees all things prosper under her direction, and the blessing of Heaven derived to his family through her. They will all join in proclaiming, that, among women who do well, honour is chiefly due to the virtuous and diligent wife, the affectionate and sensible mother. Bp. Horne.

Pr 31:10 An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.

Are you pursuing the things that will lead to blessing, encouragement and knowledge of the Truth towards those in your circle of care and influence? Although we see praise from children and husband in these verses, our greatest encouragement comes from knowing we

are serving God well. Our character should never be dependent on the recognition or acknowledgement of others. Rather, it is our love for God and the desire to obey and honor Him in all things that should drive our behavior.

Pr 31:30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, [But] a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

she is genuine; there is no pretense in who she is; no masquerading qualities that are only seen on the outside; her heart is honest in its love for God (v. 30)

charm <chen> graciousness; subjective kindness or favor or objective beauty.

deceitful <sheqer> an untruth; a sham

vain <hebel> emptiness; something transitory and unsatisfactory

The phrase 'charm is deceitful' makes me think of the word flattery. Flattery is insincere praise or compliments to win favor. Its motives are dishonest.

Think of someone selling a car or a home who is dishonest. They may take measures to cover up things are displeasing or broken. But the real problem is not eliminated, it just looks okay on the outside. This is called false representation.

Pr 11:22 [As] a ring of gold in a swine's snout, [So is] a beautiful woman who lacks discretion.

The word beauty in the above verse means just that - beauty. What happens to outward beauty? It's transitory! It lasts a very short time. You've heard the saying 'here today and gone tomorrow'. Beauty that comes from a heart devoted to God will transcend an aging face and body. Love for God is better than Botox!! ☺

1Pe 3:3-4 And let not your adornment be [merely] external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but [let it be] the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

What kind of beauty is lasting? What does our verse say?

A woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.

She loves and honors God above all else.

fears <yare'> fearing; morally, reverent

What does it mean to fear the Lord?

Pr 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Pr 8:13 "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way, and the perverted mouth, I hate.

Pr 6:16-19 There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: 17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, 19 A false witness [who] utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.

Ex 1:17-21 But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live. 18 So the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?" 19 And the midwives said to Pharaoh,

"Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous, and they give birth before the midwife can get to them." ²⁰ So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. ²¹ And it came about because the midwives feared God, that He established households for them.

Lu 1:46 And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. ⁴⁸ "For He has had regard for the humble state of His bonds slave; for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. ⁴⁹ "For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name.

"she shall be praised"

praised <halal> to shine, celebrate, commend, renowned

This is the lasting grace, the unfading beauty. Adam Clarke's Commentary

Godliness is at once the source and the crowning grace of all her excellencies. Annotated Bible Notes

Pr 31:31 Give her the product of her hands, And let her works praise her in the gates.

her actions and character speak for themselves (v. 31)

And let her own works praise her in the gates.] Let what she has done be spoken of for a memorial of her; let her bright example be held forth in the most public places. Let it be set before the eyes of every female, particularly of every wife, and especially of every mother; and let them learn from this exemplar, what men have a right to expect in their wives, the mistresses of their families, and the mothers of their children. Amen. Adam Clarke's Commentary

All the actions, diligence, and care we have discussed in Proverbs 31:10-31 is done from a heart that fears and loves God. Not for praise or recognition. However, the result of following the Lord in all areas is the blessing of those who have received this woman's compassion. In turn, she is praised.

What legacy are you leaving as you go about your daily responsibilities towards those in your household or sphere of influence? What is your example to those around you? Do they see your motivation as love for God above all?

Think of your time, energy, resources, thoughts and activities. Where does the use of these things in your life point towards? Who is the benefactor? What kind of example are you leaving to those who will come after you?