



# REFLECTIONS OF A JEWEL: THE MANY FACETS OF A WOMAN'S LIFE<sup>©</sup>

A Study on Proverbs 31:10-31

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Following 30 chapters, which are written by sages and addressed to their male pupils, a chapter containing a mother's warnings and the characteristics of a virtuous woman emerges as the crowning touch of the book. The qualities of wisdom advanced in the book of Proverbs are lived out in the home.

Verses 10-31 contain a sequential alphabetic acrostic<sup>1</sup> praising a virtuous woman. This epilogue portrays the characteristics of a wise, godly woman. Nothing is known about the emotions or thoughts of this woman. We are viewing a woman's portrait, not reading her diary. Like the rest of proverbs, these verses recount observations in concentrated form, comparing and contrasting the virtues of this woman. The accomplishments of the passage didn't happen in one day. They took a lifetime. But don't focus on her actions, look for the qualities in her life which made her godly? Don't do what she did. Become what she was.

She is the counterpart to the mighty man of valor—warrior of Israel. As this courageous hero was to the nation Israel, so was the virtuous woman to the home. The king depended on him; her husband trusted in her. He provided strength in war; she imparted strength of character. He was clothed in crimson; she was adorned in scarlet. He conquered a nation; she managed a household. He surveyed a battlefield; she selected a vineyard. He was honored by a nation; she was praised by her family.

Wisdom was the prism from which her virtue radiated. And that wisdom was grounded in her fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7). She was wise because she loved the Lord her God with all her heart, soul and might, applying the Word to every aspect of her life (Pr. 18:22; 19:14; 3:13-15). She was the Mary/Martha of the Old Testament.

Not only is the wife of Proverbs 31 exalted, but the home is elevated as a fortress and a castle, a place of protection and blessing, of training and love. The Christian home at the same time is to be a launching pad and a haven. Children are to be slowly weaned from the security of their youth toward dependence upon the Lord. (And this is especially difficult for a single parent.) While the husband and wife are to become increasingly more interwoven in an intimate and mutually dependent relationship, a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and His bride, the church.

We as Christian women must seek to live godly lives. Our goal is to be virtuous and, by modeling virtue, to (1) encourage other Christian women in their walk with the Lord; (2) present an envious lifestyle to the unbeliever that they might trust the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior; (3) train our daughters to be virtuous women, and (4) teach our sons to choose virtuous wives.

**Proverbs 31:10-31** presents an overview of the life of a godly woman. Like the rest of Proverbs, it relates experiences and observations in concentrated form.

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<sup>1</sup> In an alphabetic acrostic, the initial letters of each verse begin with consecutive letters of the alphabet.

## **10 Who can find a wife<sup>2</sup> of noble character? For her value is far more than rubies.<sup>3</sup>**

A virtuous, or godly, woman is rare, precious to God and others. She is more valuable than all earthly possessions. In ancient Israel, after a man was married, he would be asked, "Have you found?" Did you marry a good woman? Is she that rare godly woman? The word translated *virtuous* or *excellent* is a complex term encompassing all her qualities, actions, and attitudes. It is a military term, translated *valor* meaning "strength" or "bravery." It was used of Israel's mighty warriors. She is the counterpart to Israel's mighty men. "A wife of noble character is the crown of her husband, but she who shames him is as rotteness in his bones" (12:4). "A prudent (wise) wife is from the LORD" (19:14).

- Dare to be a woman of God in the midst of mediocrity!

## **11 The heart of her husband has confidence in her, and he has no lack of gain.**

His soul (emotion, will, intellect) trusts her without anxiety; his trust is not misplaced; she is trustworthy. She fulfills her role with excellence. She is all he needs. Psa. 23:1 "I shall not want." *Trust* - "to lean on, be confident," often used with the Lord as the object

- Are you trustworthy? Are you fulfilling your role as friend, wife, mother?

## **12 She brings him good and not evil all the days of her life.**

She is gracious, forgiving, not vengeful. She is a "perpetual spring of nothing but good" (Kidner). She does not cause grief, harm, or distress. Her consistency is a result of the Spirit-filled life (Gal. 5:22,23). "It is better to live in a desert land, than with a contentious and vexing woman" (Prov. 21:19). "A wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands (Prov. 14:1).

- How do you treat those around you? What are the criteria for your actions?

## **13 She obtains wool [winter] and flax [linen, summer], and she is pleased to work with her hands.**

She has specific objectives, and is content in her sphere of activity)  
She plays an active role in her own happiness; joyful, not complaining or bitter.

- What is your attitude about your calling, whether at work or home?

## **14 She is like the merchant ships; she brings her food from afar.**

She possesses an enterprising spirit. She "goes beyond nearest circle to make provision for her home"

- Don't settle for second best! Be creative!

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<sup>2</sup> Underlined words denote the first word in the Hebrew Bible, which is part of the acrostic.

<sup>3</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the NET Bible®: New English Translation™, (1998).

**15 She also gets up while it is still night, and provides food for her household and a portion to her female servants.**

She is unselfish, rising before the end of night (before 6:00 a.m.). *Portions* means "labor" (Ex. 5:14). She is a manager/servant.

- What is in the best interest of others?

**16 She begins her work vigorously; and she strengthens her arms.**

She is discerning, creative. To consider is to design, or consider the options  
Uses her abilities for a productive purpose.

- Are you creative in your everyday tasks and relationships?

**17 She girds herself with strength and makes her arms strong.**

The LORD is her strength. She relies on Him in her everyday life. Her stability is in Him.  
She is not overwhelmed by circumstances.

- Are you relying on your own strength? Or, are you trusting God?

**18 She knows that her merchandise is good; and her lamp does not go out in the night.**

She evaluates her activities [taste]. Evaluation based on observation. Her lamp stays lighted, not because she's up all night, but because her oil is good. (Matt. 25:1-13[8]).

- Evaluate your actions. What is your standard? The Word of God?

**19 Her hands take hold of the distaff, and her hands grasp the spindle.**

She applies herself to a task. Refers to purposeful, artistic, skillful, successful work.

- She you attack a job wholeheartedly?

**20 She extends her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hand to the needy.**

She is generous with her time and resources. This is a description of her character. She is pleasing to God. Shows sympathy, readiness to help disabled or distressed, counsel. Gives to the destitute, beggars.

- Be willing to become personally involved in lives of others.

**21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all of her household are clothed with scarlet.**

She anticipates and prepares for the future, which eliminates anxiety. She planned for the worst conditions. *Scarlet*, high quality wool, preserves warmth, associated with luxury, used for temple curtains, veil, ephod, and priest robe. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18).

- Be clothed in righteousness of Christ.

**22 She makes for herself coverlets; her clothing is fine linen and purple.**

She is not a martyr, yet provides for herself. She has self-worth based on God's love for her. Egyptian *linen* of great value, associated with nobility. *Purple* (Tyre, Sidon) color of royalty, temple curtains, priests garments, angelic attire.

- Make the most of what God has provided for you.

**23 Her husband is well-known in the city gate when he sits with the elders of the land.**

She adapts to him, is his helpmeet. His reputation is from his activity and associations.

- Don't demand rights for yourself.

**24 She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.**

She is not impulsive, plans ahead, uses her talents to get what she needs.

- Exercise self-discipline. Is organized.

**25 She is clothed with strength and honor and she can laugh at the time to come.**

She is prepared for whatever comes her way. *Dignity* means "glory, honor, excellence, confidence." She is "armed against all sorrow and care" (v. 17). She "girds herself with strength." "Blessed are those whose strength is in Thee" (Ps. 84:5). "Seek the LORD and His strength" (Psa. 28:7; 105:4). "A gracious woman retains honor" (Pr.11:16). The opposite is to be "clothed with shame and disgrace (Ps. 35:26).

- What qualities are your greatest assets? How does God want you to use them?

**26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, and loving instruction is on her tongue.**

She speaks that which honors God and benefits the hearers. *Kindness* is "lovingkindness, loving grace." "The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands." She is contrasted to the contentious, foolish, brawling, evil woman (Pro. 14:1). The cornerstone of wisdom is the fear of the Lord (Pro. 1:7; Jas. 1:5; 3:13-18).

- Think, pray before speaking, responding or reacting.

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

She alertly guides the actions of her children. She is active, not idle, not wasting her time. *Ways* refers to paths, conduct, walk, comings and goings with the emphasis place on direction. *Idleness* refers to a failure to perform necessary tasks [sluggard - plant, harvest]. Redeem the time, the days are evil (Eph. 5:16). A child left to himself causes grief; discipline results in delight (29:15,17). Idle, gossips, busybodies (I Tim. 5:13, 14).

- What goals do you have for your children? How are you helping them to put the Lord first in their lives?

**28 Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband also praises her:**

Her godliness is recognized and applauded by those around her. The hardest place to live the Christian life is at home (cf. Eph. 5:22f). A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband (12:4). When God's Word is in our heart, we "will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man" (3:4).

- Pray for an impact on lives of others

**29 "Many daughters have done valiantly, but you surpass them all."**

She does not settle for a mediocre Christian life, not a lukewarm believer (Rev. 3:15-17). *Done nobly* is to "do worthily." She became the best she could be. "You have become a godly (virtuous) wife!" *many* (rab); *nobly* [noble things] (energy, moral activity in accordance with one's calling, v. 10); *excel* – incomparable

- Be sure that your standards are set by God, not others.

**30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord will be praised.**

Her value and honor are based in the Lord. She is not a beautiful woman lacking discretion (Pro. 11:22). *Virtue* is an internal measurement of beauty. It cannot be bought or inherited, but is a by-product of fearing the Lord. This is the answer to the search for virtuous woman in verse 10. *Charm* is grace. *Deceitful* refers to a falsehood or lie. *Vain* means "fleeting, fruitless."

- True self-worth is based on our relationship with the Lord

**31 Give her credit for what she has accomplished, and let her works praise her in the city gates.**

Her life is a testimony of her inward beauty. *Product* refers to "fruit, firstfruits, or reward." *Works* are "an action, activity or product." She is adorned with good works and godliness, resulting in personal rejoicing and reciprocal blessing (1 Tim. 2: 9,10; Pro. 12:14). The product of her works is praise.

- Like in the Book of James, unbelievers must see good works in our lives.



**How has the Lord ministered to you as a result of this study? What touched your heart?**

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**What has the Lord challenged you to do after studying Proverbs 31?**

**In your relationship with the Lord?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**As a wife?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**As a mother?** \_\_\_\_\_

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***May you become the godly woman of Proverbs 31 woman—rare, noble, and precious to God, your family, and others! You will be blessed indeed!***

***Pray about how you could share this study with other women.***

