

Mother's Day 2022

The Virtuous Woman

Text: Proverbs 31:10-31

Introduction:

1. "The last page of the Proverbs displays the full-length portrait of a heroine". (Arnot)
2. Chapter 31 of Proverbs is a prophecy taught by a mother to her son (Vs. 1-2). He is referred to as "king Lemuel". There is no reference elsewhere in the Bible to a king named Lemuel so most commentators assume it was an affectionate name Bathsheba called Solomon as a child. The name means "belonging to God". If this was Bathsheba's instruction to Solomon then it reveals the grace of God in Bathsheba's life to make her a godly mother in spite of her moral failure with her adulterous affair with King David. Whatever the case may be as to the identities of those involved, here we have a wise mother teaching her son godly wisdom and seeking to prepare him for the future.
3. Her instruction is divided into two sections:
 - Section 1 (Vs. 1-9): A mother instructs her son about what will hinder his leadership ability.
 - Section 2 (Vs. 10-31): A mother instructs her son about the ideal kind of wife & helpmeet who will facilitate her husband's leadership.
4. This passage on the Virtuous woman is relevant to all. It is relevant to women who are already wives and mothers. It is relevant to unmarried ladies to teach them the godly ideals they should aspire to as Christian ladies preparing for marriage. It is relevant to married men that they might learn to better appreciate the privilege and blessing of being married to a virtuous woman. It is relevant to single men that they might know what kind of help meet to be looking for.
5. In these verses we get the heart of God on what is really of importance and value for a Christian wife and mother. There are many voices in the world today trying to tell women what they should be in this life. This passage of Scripture gives us **God's perspective** on what true womanhood is.

I. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF A VIRTUOUS WOMAN (VS. 10-12)

A. The Question revealing Her Value (Vs. 10a)

1. The question implies that such a woman is hard to find. Her rarity adds to her value. She is like a rare jewel!
2. Virtuous women come from God!
 - a. Prov. 19:14 "House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is **from the LORD.**"

Mother's Day 2022

- b. Prov. 18:22 "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth **favour of the LORD.**"
3. The word virtuous means competent strength. The English word comes from the Latin word 'virtus' meaning manly excellence, valour. It is also translated 'valour' in numerous places in the O.T. (E.g., Josh. 1:14, 6:2, 8:3, 10:7 etc...). Also 'strength' (1 Sam. 2:4), 'power' (1 Sam. 9:1), 'valiant' (1. Sam. 14:52). Ruth was referred to as a 'virtuous' woman in Ruth 3:11. In this very chapter the word is translated 'strength' in verse 3. There is nothing wrong with a woman of strength if she is strong for the right things!
4. The word also contains the idea of moral excellence and goodness. Her strength of character is the primary quality in view in this context (S. Vs. 17)

B. The Illustration of Her Value (Vs. 10b)

1. Her value is said to exceed rubies. This reveals how exceedingly precious a virtuous woman is.
5. Illustration: The value of rare jewels/metals.

C. The Demonstration of Her Value (Vs. 11-12)

No one knows the value of the virtuous woman more than the man privilege to be married to her.

1. She has the confidence of her husband (Vs. 11)
 - a. An amazing statement given the fact that elsewhere God's Word condemns trust in anything apart from God! This statement elevates the virtuous wife to the highest level.
 - b. Trust is specifically towards her wise management of the family economy. The word 'spoil' is a military metaphor that refers to the practice of plundering riches of a conquered people.
 - c. "Her management is so skilful, industrious, and economic that her husband has no temptation to go out of the way to do aught that is dishonest in order to increase his resources." (Thomas)
2. She is a constant blessing to her husband (Vs. 12)
 - a. She does her husband "good and not evil". Sadly, some women are a constant source of vexation and trial to their husbands. Not the virtuous woman. "**A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband:** but she that maketh ashamed *is* as rottenness in his bones." (Prov. 12:4) "Every **wise** woman **buildeth** her house: but the **foolish plucketh it down** with her hands." (Prov. 14:1)
 - b. The phrase "all the days" reveals that her commitment is true, reliable and constant. Her commitment to her husband is "till death us do part".
 - c. Gen 2:18 "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an **help meet** for him."
 - d. Titus 2:4 "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to **love their husbands**, to love their children,"

Mother's Day 2022

3. She is a compliment to her husband (Vs. 23)

II. THE PRACTICE OF A VIRTUOUS WOMAN (VS. 13-27)

The virtuous woman is an active, serving woman. Verse 10-12 tell us who the virtuous woman is; these verses tell us what she does. Let's look at her activities in 5 key areas:

A. The Clothing of Her Household (Vs. 13, 21-23)

1. The Clothing of her Children (Vs. 13, 21).
 - a. The heart and hand behind it (Vs. 13).
 - i. 'seeketh' = she is proactive.
 - ii. "worketh willingly" = she is positive. Reveals her heart. She is content, happy and fulfilled in her labours.
 - iii. Note the frequent references to this woman's hands – 'hands' (13), 'hands' (Vs. 16), 'arms' (Vs. 17), 'hands' (Vs. 19), 'hand' (Vs. 20). This woman's inner devotion to God is expressed in outward service to her husband, household and community. She is a servant.
 - iv. Someone wisely commented, "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world."
 - b. The practicality of it (Vs. 21). The clothing she has provided for her family is suited to the needs; in this case, to meet the cold weather. The word 'scarlet' refers to "costly wool". The clothing is good quality. Note: This does not mean a woman needs to get caught up in the fashion fads and waste money on brands. It simply means she is wise to provide the right kind of clothing for her family that will be practical and useful.
2. The Clothing of Herself (Vs. 22)
 - a. Beautiful coverings for the home – "coverings of tapestry". This could include carpets, coverlets and quilts. Likely bed covers as the same phrase is used of the strange woman in 7:16 who decks her bed "with coverings of tapestry". The strange woman beautifies her bed for evil purposes, the godly woman beautifies her home and bedroom for godly purposes. This speaks of a woman who is a homemaker, she beautifies her home with her creativity. Speaks of a woman who puts thought and effort into marital intimacy.
 - b. Beautiful clothing for herself – "her clothing is silk and purple". She is a woman of godly taste and culture. Her dress is dignified, tasteful, beautiful and befitting a godly woman.
 - i. There are two aspects to her adornment – outward (Vs. 22) & inward (25). Some say that one's dress doesn't really matter; the heart is the most important thing. While it is true that the condition of the inner man is of vital importance, a godly woman's inner character and godliness will be

Mother's Day 2022

reflected in her outward adornment. God desires both inward and outward modesty.

- ii. Her dress, though beautiful and attractive, is in harmony with her spiritual adornment of strength and honour (25) and is consistent with her fear of God (Vs. 30).
 - iii. This is the type of adornment the Bible requires for a Christian lady. It does not condemn beautiful apparel but requires that it be consistent with the Christian profession a woman holds. There are two words that should describe a Christian lady's dress:
 - iv. **Feminine:** Deut. 22:5 "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God."
 - v. We are witnessing a tremendous loss of feminine, lady-like, stately dress in our 21st century even among Christian women. Increasingly, due to the blurring of the distinctions between the genders (Sodomite agenda) and the feminist movement, women are dressing and grooming themselves in a masculine fashion.
 - vi. "The real pants revolution came in the 1960's with unisex fashions, though even at this time women wearing pants were often refused entry to restaurants and the whole subject was one of heated debate. By the 1970s rules and social attitudes had relaxed and pants of many lengths and styles had become an acceptable part of female dress for both casual and formal attire." Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Costume and Fashion
 - vii. **Modest:** 1 Tim. 2:9-10 "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." How we need a return to modest beauty and godly femininity in a culture that has become so drunk with sensuality and depravity.
3. The Clothing of Her Husband (Vs. 23). She is the secret behind her husband's success. His reputation as a leader among other leaders is tied back to her success as a helpmeet.

B. The Feeding of her Household (Vs. 14-15)

1. Her care of her household in relation to the preparation of food is in view in these verses (her kitchen). What a big job this is for a mother that requires constant planning, careful shopping and skilled cooking!
2. "Like the merchant ships that brought precious things from distant lands, so this woman is creative and diligent to provide quality meals

Mother's Day 2022

for her household. She is knowledgeable about food and thrifty in shopping!" (Cloud)

3. She is willing to sacrifice sleep in order to properly prepare meals for the household. Note: Remember context of the East. Probably represents the main meal of the day. Don't get discouraged if you are not an early riser. The main point is that she is a good time manager and is diligent to make sure the meals are prepared for her family.

C. The Financing of her Household (Vs. 16-19; 24)

1. She invests (s. 16). She makes carefully thought-out financial decisions within the context of her husband's headship and oversight.
2. She sells (Vs. 18, 24). Notice the reference to 'merchandise' (Vs. 18) and the 'merchant' (Vs. 24). A good woollen garment in the ancient world would cost over two month's wages and an inexpensive line one half a month's wages.
3. Note: The virtuous woman does not usurp or replace her husband's role as the primary leader and provider for the home. He is the one out in the "gates" of the city. Rather, she helps and assists him in his calling and supplements the family income from the home with her skill and creativity. She provides an indirect contribution to the household's economy. This is very different to the concept of the modern career woman who neglects her home for the work force. The woman described in this passage directs the majority of her time and energies to her husband and household and uses the surplus of what she produces to help the family finances. The modern model reverses this. The bulk of the 21st century woman's energy and time goes to the work place and her boss and the husband and family come second. The virtuous woman's industry is clearly **home based**. This is the Biblical pattern.
4. Titus 2:5 "To be discreet, chaste, **keepers at home**, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."
5. 1Tim. 5:14 "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, **guide the house**, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." The phrase "guide the house" literally means "a house despot or lord". She manages the home.

D. The Ministering within Her Household (Vs. 20, 26)

1. The Ministry of Helps (Vs. 20)
 - a. "The hands that grasp to produce open wide to provide" (Waltke).
 - b. In Vs. 19, her hands close around the instruments of her weaving. Her hands open to those in need around her in Vs. 20. The home is ministry headquarters for the virtuous woman!
 - c. The phrase "stretcheth out her hand" means to spread out her palm. Speaks of one who has an open and generous hand.
 - d. Note: A woman who functions within her God-given role and framework blesses not only her family, but also flows out in

Mother's Day 2022

ministering to others as well. Sadly, this ministry is often missing in the church of the 21st century as so many Christian ladies are absorbed in the workplace rather than the home.

2. The Ministry of Counsel (Vs. 26)
 - a. **Wisdom:** she has a teaching ministry to others. In Scripture, the words of the tongue are an expression of what is in the heart (Prov. 15:2; Matt. 12:34). Wisdom in the mouth implies it is already possessed in the heart. Titus 2 exhorts older women to have a ministry of teaching in the lives of younger women. This woman's mouth is filled with Scriptural wisdom, not the latest gossip from Hollywood or the worldly philosophies of the day. A godly woman can have a tremendous and positive influence for good and godliness if she shares God's wisdom with others. While she is not to assume a formal teaching position in the church (See 1 Corinthians 14:34 & 1 Timothy 2:11-15), she can teach and counsel in other settings. For example:
 - i. She can counsel her husband. Abigail a good example of this (1 Samuel 25).
 - ii. She can instruct her children (Prov. 22:6).
 - iii. She can teach other ladies (Titus 2:3-4).
 - iv. She can help counsel immature believers. Aquila and Priscilla an example of a husband-and-wife team helping Apollos understand the way of God "more perfectly" (Acts 18:26).
 - b. **Kindness:** Note the word 'law'. This refers to a governing principle. Her tongue is gracious and kind. She builds up rather than tears down. She is not blunt and rude. When she is firm, she does it with a sweet spirit. What a contrast to the "catty" woman who used her tongue to slander, backbite and wound.

E. The Watching of Her Household (Vs. 27)

1. She "looketh well" = refers not only to looking attentively but also peering into the future (See Prov. 22:3; 27:12). This woman is a wise shepherdess to her family. She watches over her home and children and is spiritually alert to dangers from the world. She is interested in the "ways" of her household meaning her concern goes beyond the externals. She also administers the day-to-day affairs of the home well.
2. She "eateth not the bread of idleness" = she does not indulge in laziness.

III. THE PRAISE OF A VIRTUOUS WOMAN (VS. 28-31)

She is:

A. Praised by her family (Vs. 28-29)

1. Her children (Vs. 28a)

Mother's Day 2022

- a. As they grow, they learn to appreciate her value more and more.
- b. Children: Do you thank your mother?
2. Her husband (28b-29)
 - a. 'praiseth' = pattern of his life, habit. Someone observed, "Piety will dispose a man to think meanly of himself, in comparison with other men, but highly of his wife, when he compares her with other women."
 - b. Vs. 29 = likely the specific content of his praise (quotation). In his eyes she is above all others. To him, she is the best woman in the world, his one and only love.

B. Praised by her God (Vs. 30)

This verse brings us to the secret behind all the qualities of the virtuous woman described in this passage. She is a woman who knows and fears God and this is the heart behind all she is and does.

1. The temporal character of natural beauty (30a)
 - a. 'favour' = refers to physical attractiveness – E.g., Rachel (Gen. 29:17) and Joseph (Gen. 39:6).
 - b. 'beauty' = natural beauty.
 - c. 'deceitful' = physical beauty does not always mean beauty of character. Delilah and Jezebel were attractive outwardly but murderous and evil inwardly. Prov. 11:22 "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion."
 - d. 'vain' = fleeting (lit. a puff of air).
2. The eternal value of spiritual beauty (30b).

C. Praised by her works (Vs. 31)

1. The poet now calls on the community to praise her. The "gates" in ancient times referred to the place of ruling and judging (See Deut. 16:18; 21:19; 25:7; Josh. 20:4; 2 Kings 7:1).
2. Her acts of service are a testimony to her life of devotion to God. While a virtuous woman may not get much praise from the world, she will be praised by those who know and love her and ultimately, she will be rewarded at the Judgement Seat of Christ for her faithfulness and godliness.

Conclusion:

1. Are you a woman of faith? Do you know God personally? Are you a godly woman who respects (fears) God and lives distinctly from the world?
2. How do you view your calling as a helpmeet, mother and home-keeper? Do you view your role as a high and holy calling? Do you see your responsibilities as sacred duties?

Tis woman's to nourish affections tree, and its fruit domestic bliss shall be; Tis hers to cultivate with patient toil each heaven-born plant in the heart's deep soul; And fruits and flowers her toil shall greet, richest flavours and odours on earth that meet.

Mother's Day 2022

Tis woman's to fashion the infant mind, to kindle its thoughts, and its hopes unbind:
To guide its young mind in the earliest flight, and lure it to worlds of unsullied light:
To teach him to sing, in his gladsome hours, of a Saviour's love, with an angel's
powers.

Tis woman's to bind up the broken heart, and soften the bleeding spirit's smart, with
the balm that in Gilead's Garden grows, with the stream that from Calvary's fountain
flows; and to light, in this world of pain and sin, the lamp of love and joy again.
(Author Unknown)