

# A Virtuous Woman

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[0:00] Proverbs 31, a virtuous woman.

! Proverbs 31, from verse 10.

She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchant's ships. She bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

She considereth a field, and buyeth it with the fruit of her hands. She planteth the vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.

She perceiveth that her merchandise is good. Her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

[1:34] She stretcheth out her hand to the poor, yea. She reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

She maketh herself coverings of tapestry. Her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come.

She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

Her children arise up, and call her blessed. Her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

[2:40] Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain. But a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.

A virtuous woman. Every week, on the eve of the Sabbath, Proverbs 31 was recited in the Jewish home.

Once a week. Once a week. The eve of the Sabbath. That's amazing, isn't it? It's really a poem. A poem, each line beginning with a different letter of the alphabet.

These were the ABCs. The ABCs, they were to be memorised. Really designed to be memorised, especially by young women as they prepared for marriage, and by young men as they learnt what to look for in choosing a wife.

Especially to be remembered. It's a timeless blueprint here, brothers and sisters today. It gives us the ancient biblical model.

[3:52] The ancient biblical ideal of womanhood and a role model for Christian women today. And of course, for me, it was a checklist that I used in searching for the wife-to-be.

Amen. But I've undertaken this morning, well, last night when I was preparing this, not to embarrass my wife too much. Well, no, I didn't say the word too much, but not to embarrass my wife over much.

But really, the Proverbs 31 woman, I could look at my dear mother as an ideal woman. But my dad beat me to it.

But my dear mother, Proverbs 31 woman. I'm sure there's lots of Proverbs 31 women here this morning too. And we're going to look at this passage in three aspects, in three sections, if you like. And the first one is, verses 10 to 12, the virtuous woman has integrity. There's an integrity about this woman. This is a virtuous woman.

[4:52] Something every Christian woman should aspire to be, should want to be. She has integrity. There's equality missing today, isn't there? In many women and many men too.

Amen. Many men and many women don't have integrity. The virtuous woman is someone that the Christian husband should be thankful for if he has one.

A virtuous woman is something every Christian young man should be looking for and accepting nothing less than. And a virtuous woman is something every Christian young lady should want to be and should be trained to be.

A virtuous woman, who can find a virtuous woman for her prices above rubies. Her value, her noble character, her value is priceless above rubies.

And the word virtuous here, it can mean valour and strength, capability. A woman with strong convictions.

[5:58] The term virtuous here means strength, efficiency and ability. And we could consider that as the strength that we can have of character, of faith, of our walk with Christ.

That virtue of God's principles applied and lived out in the day by day. It could mean the character, the moral character, the strength, the firmness, the unwaveringness, you could say.

Amen. That virtuous woman, a woman of great strength, of character, of physical energy, of the Old Testament expression. It was used a couple of other times in the word of God.

In Ruth 3, verse 11, used of Ruth. Everyone in the city knew that Ruth was a virtuous woman. There was an integrity about her, about her life.

A strength of character. As she feared God, as she loved the truth, as she hated sin. Others would take note of that. This was exceptional. This was standing out.

[7:00] This was unusual. It was standing out from the crowd. A woman of strength. A woman of character. And Proverbs 12, 4 uses the expression virtuous again of a woman.

Proverbs 12, 4, it says that she will not make her husband ashamed. A woman who is virtuous. A woman of strength. A godly woman. A woman with integrity.

With godly integrity. It's rare. It's a rare find. It's a rare gem. A treasure that we, as husbands, as men, can thank God for women such as that.

Far above rubies. More than just the outward sparkle. More than just the outward gloss. That there is a character there. There is a virtue there that's beyond the skin deep.

And the heart of her husband does safely trust in her so that he shall have no need of spoil.

Integrity. She can be trusted. She can be trusted to be honest, to be loyal, to be supportive, to speak well of the husband and to him, to be submissive to his leadership.

[8:09] He trusts her management of their resources. She will not deliberately let him down. The husband, his heart, doth safely trust in her.

And Proverbs 19, 14, it says, A prudent wife is from the Lord. A prudent wife is from the Lord. A virtuous woman has integrity.

Verse 12, She will do him good all the days of her life and not evil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

A gentle and loving spirit. Some wives criticise their husbands publicly. My wife could give you a big long list of all my faults, I'm sure.

If you'd like to see her afterwards, she won't tell you any of them. Some wives run up needless bills. Some wives alienate the children against their fathers.

[9:12] Some wives break their husbands' hearts by being unfaithful. Some wives are rebellious. But the Proverbs 31 woman is virtuous. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

A virtuous woman will do what is good for their husbands. They will talk quietly to God about their husbands' faults and, if necessary, deal with them quietly. They say and do supportive things on behalf of their husbands.

They're careful about their spending habits. They are a one-man woman. They are supportive of their husband's leadership in the family. They stick with the husband even if he is ill.

As you can see, a virtuous woman is a rare find. Very special. Be thankful if you are one. Be striving to be one. Husbands, be thankful if you are married to one.

And, of course, maybe if you fail in the past, be one in the future. God will help you. She has integrity. She has integrity. And secondly, from verses 13 to 24, you can see that not only has the

virtuous woman got an integrity, from verses 13 to 24, you can see that a virtuous woman has industry.

[10:26] She has industry. Verse 13, she seeketh wool and flax and worketh willingly with her hands. 13 of the 22 verses describe her labour.

She's opposite of the sluggard, as mentioned in Proverbs. Her candle goeth not out at night. Verse 18, and she eateth not the bread of idleness.

Verse 27. She's not like the young widows described in 1 Timothy 5.13, who are idle, wandering about from house to house, takers, also in busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. And when it says here of flax, flax was a fibrous plant that was drawn out and twisted into yarn or thread for the manufacture of linen.

And it was grown in ideal conditions in Egypt, and there was no better linen than the fine linen of Egypt. And this is one reason why the seventh plague was so terrible.

[11:28] The judgment as the hailstones came down, mixed with fire, it smote every herb of the field. So it would have, amongst other things, totally destroyed the flax crop.

And from flax we can make a variety of materials, including the sails of ships or of delicate scarves, of course canvas. And the godly woman, it says here, she seeks out the flax.

She seeks out the wool and the flax, the two basic garment making materials. And the woman enjoys so much that she plans ahead for what she needs in order to accomplish her responsibilities. Verse 13, her labour is willing. She willingly works with her hands. She doesn't work because she's forced to. No one is standing over her forcing her to.

It's a labour of love from her heart because she's committed to God and her family. Her labour is varied. She has many skills. A virtuous and successful housewife and mother is a woman of great ability and initiative, and her talents are certainly not wasted in the home.

[12:36] It was customary amongst the Jews to bring up all the young ones to learn useful handicrafts. Sadly neglected in these modern times.

I know I was at a godly home and saw the young women cooking and preparing the meal. And that was a blessing to me to see young women learning how to cook, how to prepare a meal.

I wish I never had that training. Not that I need it. But the extent of my culinary skills are baked beans and scrambled egg.

But thank God. We need those skills. And godly women will learn those skills to prepare. She works willingly with her hands. There's a skill there.

There's a flair there. There's a talent there. She works wisely. She uses her time wisely to conduct herself. And she works. There's no hints of laziness here.

[13:31] She works. And she's praised by God for it. She works willingly. She's willing to get her hands dirty. As the old saying goes, A woman of God is not above manual work.

And I know that can be so too. I know Julie's sister, for example, she grows lots of veggies in the garden. And what a blessing that is to the family. And there's lots of different ways we can, as godly women, you can work willingly with your hands.

The godly woman, the virtuous woman, she's hardworking, she's skillful, and God praises her for it. Verse 14, She's like the merchant ships. She bringeth her food from afar.

She's a good shopper. And all the women said, She's a good shopper. My wife's got an anointing for her. She's a good shopper.

She bringeth her things from afar. And she just loves to go out and shop. And verse 15, She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

[14:33] A virtuous woman is totally diligent in preparing that food for her family, ensuring that her family is welfare. Verse 16, She considers a field, and buyeth it with the fruit of her hands.

She planteth a vineyard. Again, that industry, that activity, there's a diligence. There's not a laziness there. There's an activity there. And young women, you can learn that. Learn to be diligent.

Learn to be active. Learn to use your hands willingly. To employ those abilities that God has placed within your life. Verse 17, She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.

She's a woman who vigorously undertakes her duties. She keeps herself healthy and active, strong with a good diet, adequate rest, and exercise.

What a picture of industry, of application. Verse 18, She perceiveth that, her merchandise is good, her candle goeth not out by night. So she gets up early, and she goes to bed late.

[15:39] You know, that's the ideal picture. Of course, some of this we know. It's the ideal. And it may not always be the case. But we can take a leaf out of the Proverbs 31 woman's book, can't we?

Young women, older women today, how can I be like that? And there's lots of application for men here too. I know, I was reading and preparing this message, you could say, there's a Proverbs 31 man in here too.

Because there's lots of messages, sort of reading between the lines, what the man does here, if you actually read Proverbs 31 very carefully. But of course, this morning we're just looking at the woman. Verse 19, sorry, verse 18, She perceiveth that, her merchandise is good, her candle goeth not out by night.

She's busy buying, selling, trading. This is a picture of a woman with industry. She's careful to find what her family needs. And there's financial skills here as she uses that money wisely.

And as it's been said, much of the money in our world is spent by women. And all the men said, Amen. Much of the money in the world is spent by women.

[16:49] Because they're the ones, not always so, but who go out shopping and acquiring the needs for the family and go out buying the necessary items for the home.

And so a woman needs those financial skills to use her money wisely and prudently. Verse 19, She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

The distaff and the spindle were for weaving. And she shows her industry with her hands. You know, think of your mothers, of your wives, of how industrious they are, working with their hands. Well, we see in verse 19, doing some weaving. You know, there was said one day that a teacher was speaking to a class of students, those second graders, and they were learning some spelling. And they were learning the lesson was on the magnet. The teacher told, they spent some time explaining what a magnet does and how it works.

[17:47] And then, the next day, there was a written test and she included this question. My full name has six letters. The first letter is M.

I pick things up. What am I? And when the test papers came back, almost 50% of the students answer the question with the word, mother.

Mother. The mother is the one who uses her hands to pick things up. And that's so true, isn't it? Her hands work willingly. She lays her hands to the weaving. And verse 20, she stretches out her hands to the poor.

She stretches out her hands to the poor. Yea, she reaches forth her hands to the needy. She's charitable. She's giving. She's selfless. She's compassionate.

She's like as the one in Acts 9.36, Dorcas. She is the seamstress who was full of good works and charitable deeds, which she did.

[18:47] You know, she was charitable. This woman, the Proverbs 31 woman, she looks to the needs of her family and also to the needs of those around about her. She's concerned about the needy, the poor, and she gives to their needs.

She's generous, hospitable, and helpful. She shows personal concern. She visits the sick. She comforts the lonely. She cares for those less fortunate. As well as her own family, she makes sure that others' needs are met.

And verse 21, it goes on, she's not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet. So it's picturing here how the godly woman will care about clothing her family. The warm clothing. Scarlet is a picture of warm clothing. And the virtuous woman, she's not afraid of changing weather conditions. She has provided adequate clothing for her family.

She has class. She is modest. She makes sure her children learn to be as well. There's something about her. There's an integrity there about the way she lives and works.

[19:53] Verse 22, She maketh herself coverings of tapestry. Her clothing is silk and purple. She makes sure that her husband and her children are well clothed. Verse 23, Her husband is known in the gates when he sitteth among the people, the elders of the land.

Now there's a well-known proverb behind every good man is a good woman. A godly wife contributes to the success and prosperity of her husband.

Proverbs 12, It says, A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband. But she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness to his bones.

Be a crown. Young women, older women, be a crown to your husband. Verse 24, She maketh fine linen and selleth it and delivereth girdles unto the merchants.

So here she is. She's running a business here. Running a business from the home. Her efforts and her industry are adding to the family income. She's a manufacturer, a merchant and a landowner.

[20:56] This woman has got so much industry here. So we've seen her integrity. Her husband does safely trust in her. We've seen her industry and all of these applied skills.

This great quality. This great character of industry. And thirdly we've seen in verses 13 through to the end, her dignity. There's a dignity about this woman.

Verse 25, Strength and honour are her clothing and she shall rejoice in time to come. Strength and honour are her clothing. There's a dignity here about this virtuous woman.

A sense of dignity. She's wise and dignified. She looks to the future and makes sure that her household is well supplied so she can laugh at the future.

She's not afraid of the future. It's something she can rejoice and have joy in and confidence in. Not because of her own doing really but because of her trusting, of her depending upon God.

[22:02] Verse 26, She opened up her mouth with wisdom and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She is able to express herself with prudence.

She opens her mouth with wisdom. What a quality. There's a prudence there. There's an intelligence attack. There's a diplomacy there in how she opens up her mouth.

People come to her for good advice. She speaks softly and kindly. She's not rude or uncaring. She's acting with love. Her conversation is wise and gentle.

Kindness. It's the theme of a good mother's teaching. She gives faithful instruction to her children and her friends as a wise and loving counselor. Look at this woman. What a picture.

What a model. What a wonderful ideal to aspire to for the women here today.

[23:05] A strong dignified woman. She has inner strength that gives her confidence in the days to come. A person who can smile at the future. She was prepared.

She was prepared. She's done all that she could to be praised of God as this woman is praised of God. And verse 30 tells us she was a God-fearing woman.

A God-fearing woman. That gave her the confidence to rejoice in the days ahead, to smile, to laugh at the future about what was to come even though there might be some challenges still to face.

There was a confidence there. There was an assurance there in this God-fearing woman. Not in her own ability but in her trust in God. This was a woman who cared about what God wanted, what God thinks and wanting to please Him above all.

Verse 27 She looketh well to the ways of her household and eateth not the bread of idleness. Here she is, she's organised, she's energetic, she's respected and she's not lazy, she's a homemaker, not a homebreaker.

[24:13] She is looking well to the ways of her household. Verse 28 Her children arise up and call her blessed, her husband also, and he praises her.

She's honoured in her home. Here we gain an insight into the character of her husband as well. He teaches the children to respect her. Her family give her, if you like, a standing ovation.

The whole family was praising this woman, the children and the husband alike. And it says, verse 29, many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

A role model for women of all time. And to close, verse 30, favour is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

A God-fearing woman. Amen. Sisters here today, aspire to be that, aspire to be that, that God-fearing woman.

[25:22] A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. When we face Him, when we meet Him, will you be praised?

Women here today, and men too. Likewise, are you one who fears the Lord? Are you one who truly fears Him? A God-fearing family. Virtue is better than favour, because favour is deceitful.

Favour can refer to a favoured position in life, to position or privilege or fame or fortune. Favour is really past him. It doesn't last, does it?

A millionaire who dies is still dead. He doesn't take any of it with him. And many men seek after a woman who has favour. But such things are deceitful and are fleeting, because there's no eternal value in them.

And virtue is better than beauty, because beauty is vain. Beauty is vain, it's fleeting, it's passing. And vain because it tends to pride and self-centredness.

[26:36] Vain because it tends to consume one with the preoccupation with it and neglecting of the spiritual and of the eternal at the expense of it.

And beauty is vain because it's of no value before God if it's not accompanied by godliness. It's like, as it's been said, Proverbs 11, 22, it's like a beautiful gold ring in the nose of a pig.

You know, beauty is vain. Favour is deceitful, but the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands and let her own works praise her in the gates.

Friends, I exhort you today, sisters here today, women here today, the starting point is to be saved. This message is really to the saved, to the Christians here, and I'm not taking it for granted that every woman here today is saved, and to be saved, it's a matter of crying out in your great need to realise your soul lack, your soul damnation without him, that he is paid for at the cross by his bleeding and dying for you, in your place.

[28:04] If you but repent and call upon him and cry out for his mercy, he can save you in the blink of an eye, in the click of a finger, he can save you in the instant where he that believeth in his heart and confesses with his mouth shall be saved.

Is Jesus your Lord, women here today? That's the starting point. The woman that fears the Lord, do you fear him? He of whom, it says, can cast you into hellfire?

Do you fear him? Are you right with him? And that applies to men and women alike. Friends, the God fearing will be praised. And I trust that women here today take heart in that wonderful message of the integrity.

A woman who trusts the Lord, a woman whose husband can trust in her. There's an integrity there, there's an industry there, her life is occupied with that which would be praiseworthy, and her dignity in that there's a virtue that excels them all, but most of all that she is a woman who fears the Lord.

And that is one thing, women, ladies here today, you can aspire to that, and God will help you to attain to that, and God will praise you for that.

[29:30] Certainly, the Bible praises women with that spirit, and I exhort you to that, by His grace to seek after that, aspire to that, and I trust we can all be encouraged to consider that.

I love to tell the story of haunting things above of Jesus and His glory.

Thank you.