

Charm Is Deceitful, and Beauty Is Vain

Proverbs 31:10-31

“Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain.” (Proverbs 31:30)

“She has haunted and terrified women all over the world for three thousand years. Her massive shadow and imposing stature towers so high that she is held in awe by all who dare to look at her magnificent and unrivaled portrait.” (Jonathan Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Proverbs*)

“Proverbs is, of course, not simply one more example of wisdom literature among many others. Nor is it merely a Hebrew book of wisdom. Proverbs is also the Christian book of wisdom, finding its highest demonstration and expression in the Person of Jesus Christ, who is wisdom itself.” (John A. Kitchen, *Proverbs: A Mentor Commentary*)

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.” (Proverbs 9:10)

I. Who Is This Woman?

“An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.” (Proverbs 31:10–12)

“An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones.” (Proverbs 12:4)

“...Fear not, my daughter, I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman.” (Ruth 3:11)

“Undoubtedly, the example of the virtuous wife described here is difficult to attain, but the same can be said of all the principles of Proverbs and all of God’s commandments. That is precisely why it is given as a model – something to strive toward while recognizing our imperfection.” (A. Prokopenko, *The Book of Proverbs*)

II. What Are the Characteristics of This Woman?

These characteristics are described in verses 13–27.

A. She is hardworking

“She **seeks** wool and flax, and **works** with willing hands. She is like the ships of the merchant; she **brings** her food from afar. She **ris**es while it is yet night and **provides food** for her household and portions for her maidens. She **considers** a field and **buys it**; with the fruit of her hands she **plants** a vineyard. She **dresses herself with strength** and **makes her arms strong**. She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. She **puts her hands** to the distaff, and her hands **hold the spindle.**”
(Proverbs 31:13–19)



B. She is compassionate

“She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.” (Proverbs 31:20)

An interesting literary device (a chiasm):

¹⁹ She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands (palms) hold the spindle.
²⁰ She opens her hand (palm) to the poor
and reaches out her hands to the needy.

C. She prepares for difficult times

“She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet. She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.” (Proverbs 31:21–22)

“Strength and dignity are her clothing, and **she laughs at the time to come.**” (Proverbs 31:25)

D. She is a blessing to her husband

“Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.” (Proverbs 31:23)

Everything the wife did, she did to help her husband, to support him, and to enable him to be a leader.

“Many well-meaning women tell themselves that they are “feathering their nest” while they bustle about arranging, cleaning, and decorating. . . It is possible to have a really nifty building and still be tearing down one’s *house*. . . Every “finer” neighborhood features magnificent buildings which contain miserable people.” (Dan Phillips, *God’s Wisdom in Proverbs*)

E. She is clothed with wisdom

“She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant. Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.” (Proverbs 31:24–27)

Everything she does is done wisely:

- She wisely builds her business;
- She wisely prepares for the future;
- She wisely speaks and instructs;
- She wisely manages her household and avoids idleness.

III. How to Find This Woman?

“Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: ‘Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.’ Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.” (Proverbs 31:28–31)

“The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down.” (Proverbs 14:1)

“**The fear of the LORD** is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.” (Proverbs 15:33)

A woman who is not afraid of hard work, not afraid of obtaining bread from afar, not afraid of the future, must fear God.

“Beauty is said to be deceitful because it passes away, and with it passes the hope of happiness based on it.” (Toy, *Proverbs*)

“We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God**. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (1 Corinthians 1:23–25)

“Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her... let her works praise her in the gates!” (Proverbs 31:28, 31)

“House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.” (Proverbs 19:14, ESV)

In 2005 *Newsweek* actually had the courage to say “Mother matters” and pointed out that according to Salary.com, “Stay-at-home moms, if compensated for all the hours they work, would net \$131,471 a year” (Newsweek Staff, “Survey: Mother Matters”).

“Many women have done excellently, but (for me) you surpass them all.” (Proverbs 31:29)

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”
(James 1:22–25)

- Do you know Christ?
- What are you striving for in your life?
- Live for Christ.
- Pray that your family would reflect the family of Proverbs 31.