

Proverbs

THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN





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Somedays, I crush it as a woman, a wife, a mom, and a lover of Jesus. I get up early; I do my devotionals, I work out, I cook all the meals, I clean the house, I play with my kids and make them smile, I play with the dogs and make their tails wag, I make time for husband and his love language, I get the laundry washed, dried, folded AND put away! I text friends and check in on them; I send prayers to people, I shop the sales at the stores and check in with my Dave Ramsey budget. I drink all the water I'm supposed to. I fall into bed with a washed face and anti-aging serum on my face and talk to God as I fall asleep. I sleep well because I conquered the day! I might even feel a little bit larger than life and pridefully think that I could run the world on days like today!

I might as well have "Proverbs 31 woman" tattooed on me! I rock!

Some days I utterly fail as a woman, a wife, a mom, and a lover of Jesus. I refuse to get out of bed, tell the kids to fend for themselves for food, bark at my husband, get annoyed with the dogs for wanting me to throw the ball, get fast food for lunch and dinner, or watch the laundry pile grow and grumble that I'm the only one who cares that it's growing, read a text message but don't reply, could care less about the Dave Ramsey budget, binge shop online, don't shower, don't work out, tell my husband, "Thanks, but not tonight," and turn on yet another episode of my TV show. Did I even talk to God once today? I go to bed defeated and feeling like a failure in all areas.

I certainly don't go to bed feeling like a Proverbs 31 woman, and I don't certainly don't even want to study about her!

Grace upon grace.

We all will have extreme days like these or days in between. We are all searching for a balance of life and service and self-care. Whether you're single, married, young, or not so young, all of us women can understand the expectations this world puts on us and that we put on ourselves.

This week as we study the Proverbs 31 woman, let's take her off a pedestal that she might be on. As we study her this week, please keep track of the most important thing about her. It isn't crushing her to-do list and being a rock star of a wife and mom—all she does stems from the foundation of her life which is built upon the Lord.

If our first and most important priority is our relationship with Jesus every day, we are Proverbs 31 women! Don't count yourself out of this title because of the days you feel like you don't measure up. God has a different measuring tape than you do!

God's encouragement for growth in our lives is not done with a whip and guilt; it's done with grace, love, and patience. Put your expectations for yourself, your life, your home, your job, and your looks, at the feet of Jesus, and come find out what love and service are about in Jesus.



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Read Proverbs 31.

1. Whose words are these being said in our passage?
2. Why would a mother tell her son what kind of wife to look for?
3. Would his mother know what it would take to run a home in eastern biblical times?
4. What is the definition of the word **virtuous**?
5. Virtuous wife is the same expression translated as “*mighty man of valor*” in Judges 6:12. Write out Judges 6:12.
6. Can you name a woman in the Bible that was known as a virtuous woman? And the name of her husband, who is known as a mighty man of valor?
7. This isn't the first time Proverbs has given wisdom about a virtuous wife. What does Proverbs 12:4 say in the King James Version?
 “_____ woman is a _____ to her _____: but she that maketh _____ is as _____ in his bones.”
8. By this version you can either be a _____ to your husband or _____ to his bones.
9. What do you think King Lemuel's mother wanted for her son?



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10. Write out what you would tell your son, or grandson, to look for in a wife right now in the year 2022. Does your list look similar to Lemuel's mom's list?

11. Does seeing this passage written from a mom to her son change your perspective on this passage?

12. Write out Proverbs 31:10:

13. Compare what the following translations say on Proverbs 31:10:

NLT: *Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is _____ than rubies.*

AMP: *An excellent woman (one who is spiritual, capable, intelligent and virtuous), who is he who can find her? Her _____ is more _____ than jewels and her _____ is far above rubies or pearls.*

Fun Facts About Rubies

- Large gem-quality rubies are more valuable than diamonds of comparable size and are considered more rare.
- The Sunrise Ruby, a 25.6-carat Burmese red gemstone, sold for a little over \$30 million.
- Pure red rubies are so rare that there is no trade data available, which is astonishing considering the current resources and technology.
- When comparing the value of rubies at 5+ carats, they are far more valuable than others on the market:
 - Ruby \$100,000/ct
 - Alexandrite \$70,000/ct
 - Diamond \$44,500/ct
 - Sapphire \$34,000/ct
 - Emerald \$23,000/ct



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14. Why does Lemuel's mom say a virtuous wife's worth is far above rubies?

As a mother in easter biblical times, Lemuel's mom knew that for her son to succeed and have a good life, his wife must be a virtuous woman, be able to work hard, have integrity, have compassion for others, plan and prepare, take care of the household, be a wife of noble character so that it brings a blessing to him in his role in the community; she must be trustworthy, and she must fear the Lord. She's using her wisdom, knowledge, and life experience of being a mom and wife in those times to encourage him to look for someone who would be a blessing to him.

The verses in Proverbs 31:10-31 are written in an acrostic form, each beginning with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet: Proverbs 31:10, *aleph*; Proverbs 31:11, *beth*; Proverbs 31:12, *gimel*, and so on to the end of the chapter, the last verse of which has the letter *tau*. (Clarke)

It was the custom for families to recite this poem at the dinner table. Writing it in an ABC pattern would help the family members to memorize it and have it in an organized way.

15. If you were a little boy or girl growing up hearing and reciting Proverbs 31:10-31, as a natural custom in the home, how would that impact your decision of what kind of wife to look for or what kind of wife to be?

16. Are we so different in 2022, that we wouldn't encourage our young men to marry a woman like this or encourage young women to be like this?

As a mom to two young boys, I now read Proverbs 31 in a completely different light, knowing it's words from a mom to her son! I frequently have conversations with my sons about their future wives and always say, "Above all else, Who must she love?" to which they reply, "JESUS!"

I would love to say that reading this passage and seeing it as wisdom for my sons lets me off the hook of being a "Proverbs 31 woman." But the truth is, if I want my sons to marry a Proverbs 31 woman, I first must model it out for them. If I want them to see what a virtuous wife looks like, I must come to grips that King Lemuel's mom is speaking as much to me as she was to her son.



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The eastern biblical traditions may be different than in 2022, but the principles of character are the same because they are biblically based. I may order my clothes from Amazon instead of hand stitching them, but I can learn to become a frugal woman with her money and find a deal just like the Proverbs 31 woman!

For each of us, the principles laid out in this passage are relevant to growing in wisdom and becoming wise women!

We've established that before anything was said about the Proverbs 31 woman's actions, her character was made known as a virtuous woman in verse 10.

17. Why do you think it was written that the character, the heart, of the Proverbs 31 woman would be established first?

18. Is character more important than actions?

Our Proverbs 31 woman was written so that we know her character, and her actions flow from her character. Let that be a lesson for us, as we journey through this life, to stop and examine our motives behind our actions.

19. Go back to the scripture written out and underline and count how many times in the passage is the phrase "she + a verb" (an action or helping verb).

There is much action happening in this passage. It is usually all the "doing" of the Proverbs 31 woman that makes most of us women feel like she is this mystical unicorn creature that we'll never be! I'm exhausted just reading all she does and can feel somewhat deflated that I'm not doing as much as she! Does anyone else relate to that?

Before we continue, let's thank Jesus that it isn't by our ACTIONS that we are saved but because of HIS action on the cross! We can breathe in His grace on our lives. Take a deep breath of that grace and blow out all the expectations that weigh heavily on you.

20. Now go back and look at the actions of the Proverbs 31 woman. Her efforts have a *purpose*. She isn't busy just to have a full day. List what the drive for her actions is from the passage:



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21. Matthew 20:28 says Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. How does knowing Jesus was a beautiful example of a servant leader motivate you in your service to others?

These actions and purposes give us another glimpse into this virtuous woman. Through her choices, we see a virtuous woman's character bloom and grow. We might live **IN** this world, but we are not **OF** this world. Our lives and actions are to embody a **Kingdom** of God-minded lifestyle and characteristics. Our character should reflect that of our **King** Jesus.

22. Thinking about the life and ministry of Jesus, what connections do you see between His love and service to others around Him?

23. How can you apply His example of love and service to your life today?

24. Write out Matthew 6:33:

25. Reread Proverbs 31:10-31 and write out what kingdom characteristics or principles you see the Proverbs 31 woman showcase through her actions. (i.e., she's compassionate, trustworthy, faithful) I can count at least 17, so they are in there!

26. Of these kingdom-minded characteristics that you wrote down, write out your top three strengths and one way God has helped you to use this strength in your sphere of influence (the people around you that you have the opportunity to influence).

Strength #1:

Strength #2:

Strength #3:



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27. We are EACH a work in progress, so look at the list and circle any which you know or think you might need to improve. Write them down and look up verses to learn what the Bible, the Word of TRUTH, has to say about them and how to grow in them.

28. What is keeping you from developing godly virtues in your life?

29. What is encouraging you to develop godly virtues in your life?

As the Proverb progresses, we see King Lemuel's mom knew that a woman's character is more important than a woman's beauty and that the foundation of her character must be rooted in the Lord.

30. Write out Proverbs 31:30.

31. Backtrack and write out Proverbs 1:7.

Proverbs begins with this teaching and ends with the Proverbs 31 woman living a life fulfilling that instruction and being blessed and praised because of it.

32. In verse 30, why should the woman be praised?

33. What does it mean to "fear the LORD?"

Jeremiah 17:7-8 ESV says, "*Blessed is the (wo)man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. (S)he is like a tree planted by water that sends out its roots by the stream and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of the drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.*"



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34. What things in this world are you tempted to trust?

The Proverbs 31 woman had a good bank account, a good status, a good title; she had beauty, good clothes, power and control, and yet, her trust was ultimately not in them. She feared the LORD, which means she honored and revered Him. She trusted HIM.

“Her devotion to God served as the seed of faith to grow a life we are all inspired by today.” (*More Than Rubies*)

35. What does Isaiah 40:8 say? “*The grass _____ and the flowers _____ BUT the Word of our _____ stands _____.*”

“The understanding of our frailty and fleeting glory, contrasted with the eternal enduring of God and His Word, should humble us in repentance before the Lord.” (David Guzik)

“God must be our foundation if we want to be women who cultivate lives of strength and legacy like the Proverbs 31 woman.” (*More Than Rubies*)

36. Are you trying to build up for yourself earthly kingdoms that will crumble and fall or expand the Kingdom of God that will last forever?

37. What areas in your life are you holding on to too tightly that God is asking you to let go of and trust HIM?

Spend some time in prayer, asking God to help you loosen your grip on things of this world. Be renewed by the transforming of your mind. Spend time in repentance, asking the Lord to forgive you for putting things of this world on a pedestal where He should be.



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King Lemuel's mom has laid a great picture of the wife her son should search for. Using the scripture and the kingdom characteristics you've pointed out, I want you to *draw the Proverbs 31 woman below*. As you draw her, label her with the characteristics. (It's okay to laugh while you're doing this if drawing isn't your thing! It's okay if yours looks like a Van Gogh painting if your drawing is your thing!)

Now, most of us will pick up the pen and start drawing the head first, BUT FIRST begin with the foundation and work up. WHY? Because she is a virtuous woman who fears the LORD. That is her foundation! Think of her as a tree starting from the ground and growing up.



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No matter what your picture looks like, chances are it's covered with labels of the characteristics and qualities of the Proverbs 31 woman. Women in this world can have so many negative labels put on them, simply because we live in a fallen world! But when our foundation is the fear of the Lord, and our entire person grows in strength and characteristics that are mirroring that of Jesus, we are more precious than rubies and are a beautiful sight!

38. Write out 1 Peter 3:3-4.

39. How solid is *your* foundation right now? Does it need some mending? Is it just beginning? Is it rock solid? (There's no right or wrong answer but before we even begin to want to be a Proverbs 31 woman, we must first make sure our foundation is Jesus. Sometimes as women we can take pride in our accomplishments, our "doings," and even our praises from the "doings.") Answer the question honestly.

40. Write out 1 Samuel 16:7.

41. What does Jesus look at first?

42. Proverbs 31:25 NLT says, "*She is clothed with strength and dignity and she laughs without fear of the future.*" Why does a Proverbs 31 woman laugh at the future?

43. When you think of the future for yourself and your family, how do you feel? Are you worried or laughing?

44. What characteristic of the Proverbs 31 woman might help you overcome the struggle of fear and worry? Everyone's situation is different, so there is no right or wrong answer. God knows what YOU need to overcome this struggle. Listen to Him tell you, press your feet into the foundation of His truth, and grow through this.



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45. We have already examined our foundations, so now examine your heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, *“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.”* What is springing out of your heart today?

If your heart is heavy with worries and concerns, lay them down at Jesus’ feet right now. He has the future beautifully written out and can be trusted with it. If we are so worried and fearful, we lose sight of what we can be doing right now for Jesus.

46. Write out Ephesians 2:10.

47. Does Jesus want us to act and do things while we are here on Earth?

As with the entire book of Proverbs, God’s Word is telling us women to be wise in our conduct, our dealings, our actions, our purpose behind our actions, and to strive to be a woman labeled as having the characteristics of one who doesn’t look like this world, so that we can go out into the world and show them Jesus through our actions.

48. Look up these other women in the Bible and write out what about them would make them a Proverbs 31 woman. These are just a few women, feel free to add to the list!

Esther:

Widow who gave her offering (Mark 12:41-44):

Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42):

Mary, mother of Jesus (Luke 1:28-38, 46-55):

Ruth:

In all these women in the Bible, and the many others not listed, we can glean from their lives the wisdom of fearing the Lord above all else. From that foundation, our character is formed. When our hearts are standing in the truth and identity of Jesus’ love for us, our actions come from a place of love, not duty.



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So many times, as women we do things or say yes to things because we feel like we “should,” not because we genuinely want to or because God has told us to! Jesus said His yoke is easy and light, and He doesn’t expect you to be a pack mule carrying ALL the things! Even the Proverbs 31 woman had help (vs. 15)!

King Lemuel’s mother ends her wisdom to her son in verse 31 by saying, *“Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.”*

You might not be hearing anyone shouting your praises at the city gate, BUT God is shouting your praises and seeing all you do! He’s making sure your heart is sound, your mind is wise, and your actions are of love.

As women who champion each other, let’s end this week’s study by sending a text message, an email, or a note in the mail, to another woman (or two or three.) and give them a shout of praise for their character and for the hard work you see or know they do!

It’s hard to receive praise sometimes, so when the message comes in just say, “Thank you!” not “oh, I’m not _____.” You’re not gloating; you’re receiving the fruit of your hands!

Let the Lord speak through each of us this week into other women’s hearts, and praise each other for being Proverbs 31 women!