



Proverbs 31 What is a Godly Woman?

Summary: A Godly woman is rooted in the fear of the Lord and produces righteous fruit, praise her for it!

Last week we looked at what the Bible has to say about being a man of God. This week we turn our attention to the ladies as we begin a short study of some of the topics of Proverbs.

We usually go verse-by-verse, chapter by chapter through whole books of the Bible, and we will begin doing that again in September when we start the book of Acts, but Proverbs doesn't flow too well if you approach it that way. So instead, we're going to look at groups or sections of proverbs that address a single subject. And this morning we begin with one of the most famous – the Proverbs 31 woman.

You don't have to be around Christian churches very long before you hear about this description of a godly woman. Unfortunately, she's developed a little bit of a reputation and when you mention her, some women inwardly groan. They've been made to feel guilty or inadequate when compared to this virtuous superwoman.

Well, ladies, I want you to know that is not my intent this morning. Remember what we have said recently about the difference between conviction and condemnation. If you feel condemned reading this passage of Scripture, something is wrong. In fact, you might even want to make a note of Romans 8:1 in the margin of your Bible near Proverbs 31. It reads:

Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

When you read about the Proverbs 31 woman you may feel conviction, God may be calling you nearer to Himself and showing you things that need to change in your life, but I want you to remember, God is faithful and He will give you everything that you need to live a life that is pleasing to Him in Christ. You're not called to figure this out on your own.

One of the most important skills you will ever learn is stop listening to yourself and others, and listen instead to your Heavenly Father instead. Know Him, know His Word, know His direction for your life, and you will find peace and rest for your soul.

The purpose of this woman's portrait is not to discourage you, frustrate you, or make you feel inadequate. It is to encourage you, and to teach men what to look for in a wife. Think of it this way: all Christians are called to be like Christ, that's the direction we're growing - we're not there yet and we're never going to fully arrive - but this is our aspiration nonetheless. Proverbs 31 shows you what is possible when a woman is fueled by the fear of God, walking in the grace of God and empowered by the Spirit of God. So, with all that said, let's read:

Proverbs 31:10 Who can find a virtuous wife?

For her worth *is* far above rubies.

11 The heart of her husband safely trusts her;

So he will have no lack of gain.

12 She does him good and not evil

All the days of her life.

13 She seeks wool and flax,

And willingly works with her hands.

14 She is like the merchant ships,

She brings her food from afar.

15 She also rises while it is yet night,

And provides food for her household,

And a portion for her maidservants.

16 She considers a field and buys it;

From her profits she plants a vineyard.

17 She girds herself with strength,

And strengthens her arms.

18 She perceives that her merchandise *is* good,

And her lamp does not go out by night.

19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff,

And her hand holds the spindle.

20 She extends her hand to the poor,

Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.

21 She is not afraid of snow for her household,

For all her household *is* clothed with scarlet.

22 She makes tapestry for herself;

Her clothing *is* fine linen and purple.

23 Her husband is known in the gates,

When he sits among the elders of the land.

24 She makes linen garments and sells *them*,

And supplies sashes for the merchants.

25 Strength and honor *are* her clothing;

She shall rejoice in time to come.

26 She opens her mouth with wisdom,

And on her tongue *is* the law of kindness.

27 She watches over the ways of her household,

And does not eat the bread of idleness.

28 Her children rise up and call her blessed;

Her husband *also*, and he praises her:

29 "Many daughters have done well,

But you excel them all."

30 Charm *is* deceitful and beauty *is* passing,

But a woman *who* fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

31 Give her of the fruit of her hands,

And let her own works praise her in the gates.

Now, think about this: Proverbs is a collection of wisdom, guidance for life, passed down from a father to his son. And at the end of the book, the very last thing the father has to say is this: find yourself a virtuous wife. Find a good helpmate. Find a competent and wise companion – she is worth more than jewels. And he goes on to describe a woman who, essentially, lives out all the other guidance and instruction contained in the book. She is wisdom personified and she is of incalculable worth.

Exactly what this woman looks like will vary across time, cultures, and families – ladies living in the outskirts of Washington DC in the 21st century might not be seeking out wool and flax – but certain things transcend time, like the woman’s heart and character, the impact she has on others, her motivation, and how the rest of us should respond to her, all things that we will focus on this morning.

We begin by noting that she is described as **virtuous**, or your translation may say valorous. The word is often used in a military context to describe the strength, power, and value of a particular soldier or unit in battle. One scholar even noted the similarity between Proverbs 31 and ancient heroic hymns, poems normally used to celebrate a soldier’s victory.¹

Life is a battle and this is the kind of woman you want on your side – a Spartan Warrior, a true companion and helpmate, a woman who fights, struggles, and resists on behalf of her family, friends, and community.

And did you notice, that even though this is written to a young man to guide him in what to look for in a wife, *nothing is said about romance or physical beauty?* In fact, the value of beauty is written off entirely in favor of character.

Proverbs 31:30 Charm *is* deceitful and beauty *is* passing,
But a woman *who* fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

That’s something important to keep in mind. As a crusty old Sergeant Major once told my brother-in-law, “I don’t care how beautiful a woman is, somewhere out there is a man who’s tired of putting up with her issues.” It’s possible to be flirty, cute, or charming in certain settings and an absolute beast in others. Or, she might be a complete knockout, but life will take its toll, and she will age just like you.

The New Testament puts it this way:

1 Peter 3:3 Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel— 4 rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

¹ (Wolters) in Longman, 539.

Proverbs 31 doesn't say anything about preferring straight hair over curls, blondes over red-heads, green eyes over blue. It says nothing about the size of her waist or her hips. Those things just aren't that important, because they don't last. If you're looking for a woman who **is worth more than jewels**, don't be sucked in by merely outward appearances, look at what comes out of her life, the fruit that is produced by the roots of her character and motives.

One of the things you see in the Proverbs 31 woman, is that she shows initiative. She is unbelievably energetic. She's not stuck at home; she's competing in the market. She's enterprising and entrepreneurial. In today's terms, you might say, she has a side-hustle and things are going well.

She is competent and competitive. She seeks wool and flax, considers a real estate investment, works it, and turns a profit. Whether it's buying land or making clothing for her family, she knows quality when she sees it and she has the skill, ability, and drive to generate enough product to take care of her family and still have some extra left over to sell and generate a profit.

She is diligent and driven. She rises early and stays up late, she doesn't eat the bread of idleness. She doesn't waste time scrolling endlessly online, she doesn't sit around gossiping or indulging, she gets up and gets work done, she advances on new projects. She has good ideas and the commitment to see them through.

Another way to say that is: she is strong - morally, mentally, and physically. She does the long-term strategizing and planning, she sees what's on the horizon and prepares for it, but she also rolls up her sleeves and gets to work with things that are tedious, tiring, and repetitive.

Her arms are powerful, from doing real work.

Years ago I came across a funny quote I love from Mark Rippetoe a somewhat snarky strength and conditioning coach. He said:

"Strong people are harder to kill than weak people, and more useful in general"

Ladies, you don't have to be masculine, but strong is beautiful and genuinely helpful. Don't be afraid or embarrassed of being strong. The people that want you to stay delicate and dainty often want to have power over you. The great women of the Bible have something in common with the great men: they work, and it makes them strong – strong mentally, strong in character, and yes, even physically strong with definition in your arms.

At her peak just a few years ago Madeleine was deadlifting over 300lbs, as a mother of three. It's funny to watch the reaction of our elderly neighbors when she and I help them move furniture – they're not sure we'll be able to do it, but Madeleine gets on one end, I get

on the other, and off we go because [she has made her arms strong](#) by doing hard work. And that strength is valuable to me and to others in her life. Proverbs 31 says I should praise her for it so I do.

But the woman here in Proverbs 31 is not just a warrior, not just a work horse, she is also wise, full of wisdom. Her life is wisdom put into action and it is evident to everyone around her.

When you put these things together, a woman who is wise enough to know what needs to happen; creative, skilled and diligent enough to make it happen; and strong and valiant enough to keep at it even in the face of opposition, monotony or trials, it does something very important – it drives out fear, worry, and anxiety. The Proverbs 31 woman understands the present and the future and she prepares for it.

The NKJV says in vs 25 [She shall rejoice in time to come](#). But most others translators render it [she laughs at what lies ahead](#). Instead of being overcome by the anxiety so many women wrestle with, she laughs without fear of what might happen.

This is a woman of tremendous confidence.

But, it's not ultimately confidence in herself and her ability to do anything, face anything. No, all these great things we have been marveling at in her life are just fruit produced by roots that are anchored in something else.

Look with me at verse 30 and you will discover the secret source of all her wisdom, strength, and courage – here is what is producing everything else:

[30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing,
But a woman *who* fears the LORD, she shall be praised.](#)

All this other stuff pours out of her life because she fears the LORD. This is what drives her. This is what motivates her. This is why and how she keeps going: she fears GOD.

But what does that mean? Is she driven by fear, afraid that's He's going to get her? Is this why she can't go sleep at night and gets up so early? Has she just traded one form of anxiety for another? What do you mean she fears the LORD?

Well, the fear of the LORD is not simply terror. God shouldn't frighten you unless you are His enemy. The fear of the Lord is an understanding of His power, greatness, worth, and holiness. We might describe it as awe. An awareness that He *could* hurt you, but understanding that, for those who will submit to Him and serve Him, God uses His power to protect you, guide you, strengthen you and show you mercy and kindness.

In Proverbs chapter one we learn that King Solomon collected all this wisdom to pass on to his son, but, before he gets into any of the practical advice, he says

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge,
But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

And now here you have a woman who fears the LORD and you see what that produces in her life and learn that it makes her more valuable than jewels, more valuable than anything else you can buy.

Listen to what the Psalms say and pay attention to the benefits that come to those who fear the LORD. Notice that it's a trust, not a terror:

Psalm 33:18 Behold, the eye of the LORD *is* on those who fear Him,
On those who hope in His mercy

Psalm 147:11 The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him,
In those who hope in His mercy.

Ps 103:11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;

Ps 103:13 As a father pities *his* children,
So the LORD pities those who fear Him.

Ps 34:7 The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him,
And delivers them.

Ps 31:19 Oh, how great *is* Your goodness,
Which You have laid up for those who fear You,
Which You have prepared for those who trust in You
In the presence of the sons of men!

Ladies, if you are battling fear, worry, doubt, depression, and anxiety – here is a prescription for your life: fear the LORD. Fear Him more than anything else. You spend so much time worrying about what others think of you – do you worry that much about what God thinks of you? Do you worry about how He will judge you? You're so concerned about what could happen about this or that or the other thing – what about God? Do you fear what He could do?

The woman of Proverbs 31 laughs at the future *because* she fears the LORD. In fact, it's the only fear this warrior woman has. She works hard because she fears the LORD. She has grown morally, mentally, and physically strong, in the service of the LORD. She knows His goodness, His grace, His presence and His promises.

And as a result, she is a blessing to the people in her life. Her husband, her children, her employees, the needy in the community - everyone she is associated with benefits from her

presence in their life. We discussed this last week when we looked at Godly men - Christians are meant to live in community, so as I grow, you're blessed, and as you grow, I'm blessed - my life is bound up with yours.

That truth comes into greatest focus in the most intimate and comprehensive of all human relationships, the relationship between a husband and wife.

Notice that because she fears the LORD, things happen in her life, decisions are made, actions are taken, and her husband prospers.

Look at vs 23

23 Her husband is known in the gates,
When he sits among the elders of the land.

She makes Him look good. She has sharpened his wisdom, dressed him well, and enhanced their family's public reputation. He is praised BECAUSE of her.

And as a result,

11 The heart of her husband safely trusts her;
So he will have no lack of gain.
12 She does him good and not evil
All the days of her life.

Not because he's so great and deserving, but because she understands the great commandment to love God and love others, beginning with her husband. When he isn't easy to love, she remembers that sometimes she's not so easy to love herself and yet God still loves her. So, she receives love from the God she fears and reflects it to this man. And if he's got an ounce of wisdom himself, he realizes what an incredible asset she is to him, what a powerful team they are together.

Men, invite your wife onto your team, open up and let her help you, and not just in a diminutive way, let her truly help you. Trust her. If she is motivated by her fear of the LORD she is going to do good things that please Him and help you.

But here's the truth -if she's a good woman, you're going to have to work to keep up with her. I know of countless marriages where the woman is strong and she'll plow right through the man. If he won't get up and do the work, she will. If he won't see what's coming and prepare, she will. If he won't make the decision, she will.

Men, it's not supposed to be that way. You're supposed to work together. Her drive and determination are a gift to you to keep you from growing lazy and complacent. Don't resent them, be challenged by them, be worthy of them. Every man hearing this needs to seriously consider before God, am I still worthy of the woman you brought to me? And I

loving her, am I leading her, or have I grow complacent and am I coasting by on her strength, letting her do the hard work? Are you still stretching and growing for her sake? Do you make her better like she makes you?

She is worth more than rubies - you need this woman in your life more than you need anything else. With precious jewels you could buy all kinds of things, but this woman is of incalculable worth - she will do you good, BECAUSE she fears the LORD!

Here's the last thing that needs to be said:

28 Her children rise up and call her blessed;
Her husband *also*, and he praises her:
29 "Many daughters have done well,
But you excel them all."
30 Charm *is* deceitful and beauty *is* passing,
But a woman *who* fears the LORD, she shall be praised.
31 Give her of the fruit of her hands,
And let her own works praise her in the gates.

See the evidence of grace in her life and praise her for it, encourage her in it publically and privately. Affirm her and respect her. She needs to hear it, does she? Others need to hear it too, they need to hear these things affirmed, valued, esteemed do they? Husbands, do you always speak well of your wife? Do you notice what she has done or accomplished? Do you speak well of her for it? Do you praise her publically? Find something you can compliment her on, and do it. Ask God to help you see and notice things. And say something. Even if it's small, even if you feel like you've said it before, affirm her. Tell her where she excels.

But let me point out one important thing from the final line of the book. It says, [let her own works praise her in the gates](#). Her husband should praise her, her children should praise her, but for various reasons not all women are going to have a husband, not all women are going to have children, no matter how badly they want them. But that doesn't mean you can't be a woman who fears God, a woman of character, a woman who is known for her works.

Single and childless women can have godly drive and ambition, they can be productive and profitable, they can be a tremendous source of blessing to others. And if you don't have a husband or children, the works you've done will still praise you yourselves. Think of the connection here with Jesus in the Triumphal Entry – He said if the people didn't praise Him, the very rocks would cry out. He was going to be praised one way or another, and single ladies, childless ladies, so will you.

I can honestly say, in almost 20 years of marriage, Madeleine has never done or said anything I know of that would bring me harm. She has made me better in countless ways. Almost anything you might respect or admire in me is a reflection of Christ in me, or Christ

in her and her standing next to me. She has encouraged me in my walk with Christ, encouraged me in ministry, forgiven me for failures, stood with me in difficulty, inspired me toward diligence, managed our home and patiently loved our children. There has never been a place I have been ashamed or embarrassed to take her. She is a crown to my head and a signet ring on my right hand. I believe, beyond all shadow of doubt, that she is working for me, desiring to do me good all the days of my life, because, she is a woman who fears the LORD.

It's my hope, my strong, fervent hope, that every husband and wife who hears this will come to the point where they are able to say the same thing, but that means we're all going to have to grow and it begins by each of us having a true and deep fear of the LORD which leads us to find forgiveness of sin and failures in Christ, guidance and direction for life in God's Word, and strength from His Holy Spirit living within us and coming upon us. Then, slowly, day-by-day, year-by-year, He will transform us, mold us, shape us into the men and women He wants us to be. We won't be perfect, but we can be productive, we can bring Him glory and do good to the people around us and we can praise others when we see them doing the same because ultimately, we're praising the God who leads them to do it.

Let's pray.