



"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies"
(Proverbs 31:10).

A Virtuous Woman

Lesson Subject: Strength and honor adorn the life of a godly woman.

L39. Date: August 1984. **Text:** Proverbs 31:10-15, 20, 23-26, 28, 30, 31.

Topic: Family; Marriage; Woman: Righteousness of.

The choice of one's life-partner is one of life's most significant decisions. Whom one marries is probably more important than if he marries. One's life-partner can be a blessing or a curse through the rest of life.

A young man should seek a marriage partner who is "*a virtuous woman*." Take note of the meaning of that term "*virtuous*." It is commonly used today to mean moral purity. Its meaning is much larger than that. Gideon was called a "*mighty man of valour*." The Hebrew word translated "*valour*" in Judges 6:12 is translated "*virtuous*" in Proverbs 31:10.

The Hebrew term here translated "*virtuous*" means "dependable, capable, energetic, dignified, wise, faithful in all places and things." A young man would want a wife who was morally pure, of course, but he would desire much more than that in his wife.

Proverbs 31:10-31 is a woman's description of an ideal woman. These are some of the words which the mother of king Lemuel taught him (Proverbs 31:1). Therefore, the standard is not too high or the duties too demanding. A good woman is here describing a good woman that her son might have guidance in selecting his partner in marriage.

The woman described in Proverbs 31 is evidently in a family of wealth. She has servants, engages in business, and is the wife of a community leader. The Christian wife who reads these words should not expect to match her in every detail. The character and conduct of this woman, not her position in society, mark her as a "*virtuous*" woman who is worthy to be

emulated today.

I. FIND HER (Proverbs 31:10)

"Who can find a virtuous woman?" That question suggests that not every woman is *"virtuous."* It further suggests that such a woman can be found, and that she is priceless to the man who marries her.

A. She is rare. There are many women, and the virtuous are scattered among them. That is indicated by a survey on marriage made among teenaged girls. The survey showed that 95 percent of them looked forward to marriage, but only 3 percent of them looked forward to housework. Those young ladies are headed for a shock and a rude awakening when the romantic ideals of marriage become reality.

The virtuous woman, on the other hand, delights in her home and the duties she has there. She gets up well before day, even after staying up into the night, to pursue her duties. They are not a matter of drudgery, but of joy to her. Let a young man look for a marriage partner who finds delight in her home (Titus 2:5).

B. She is priceless. We consider the most valuable things in the material world to be precious stones or precious metals. But a woman who is morally pure and committed to serve God by serving her household is of a value *'far above rubies'* (verse 10). Observe these evaluations of her. *"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband"* (Proverbs 12:4). *"Every wise woman buildeth her house"* (Proverbs 14:1). *"A prudent wife is from the LORD"* (Proverbs 19:14). Therefore, *"whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD"* (Proverbs 18:22).

Let the man who is married to a good wife prize her above all other persons or things. Let the young man who is seeking a wife look for a woman with the virtues described in Proverbs 31:10-31.

II. IDENTIFY HER (Proverbs 31:11-27)

The qualities of the *"virtuous woman"* are set forth in Proverbs 31:11-27. There has been no successful attempt to outline in systematic order the qualities identified and praised. But the virtuous woman is set forth in her role as a wife, mother, neighbor, worker, and as praiseworthy in character. References to those roles are scattered throughout the passage.

A. The virtuous woman is a good wife (verses 11, 12, 23, 28). Three qualities identify her as a wife. (1) She is faithful in her commitment to her husband. *"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her"* (verse 11). She holds him as the most important person in her life. (2) She is helpful; her deepest joy is in loving service to him. *"She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life"* (verse 12). She lives for him, to be his helper and partner in all things. (3) She is supportive of his professional life, so he is recognized as a leader in the community (verse 23). She gives her husband the honor all wives should give (Esther 1:20). She needs no *"fulfillment in life"* other than being his wife and helper.

That makes her a woman worthy of praise. *"Her husband. . . praiseth her"* (Proverbs 31:28). Blessed is the man with such a wife. He has a treasure far beyond his estimation.

B. She is a loving mother (verses 15, 21, 27, 28). Three qualities identify her role as mother in the family. (1) She provides daily food for all her family, even at personal inconvenience. *"She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household"* (verse 15). The family starts the day after a nourishing breakfast prepared in love. (2) She provides clothing appropriate for the weather. *"She is not afraid of the snow. . . for all her household are clothed with scarlet"* (verse 21). (Note: The *"scarlet"* could refer to expensive clothing or to very heavy clothing needed in winter. The heavy clothing seems to be the most appropriate interpretation.) (3) She trains the children. *"She looketh well to the ways of her household"* (verse 27). Her fulfillment is in her family.

That makes her worthy of praise. *"Her children arise up, and call her blessed"* (verse 28).

C. She is a concerned neighbor (verses 16, 20, 21). Two qualities mark her as a neighbor. (1) She is an example of steady and profitable work in investments and caring for her possessions (verse 16). She must work *"with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men"* (Ephesians 6:7). (2) She shows mercy in providing for the needy. *"She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy"* (verse 20). In spite of her hard work, she does not hold selfishly to what she has. She gives to the Lord by giving to the poor (Proverbs 19:17).

That makes her worthy of praise. *"Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates"* (verse 31).

D. She is a diligent worker (verses 12, 14-19, 21, 22). Eight things are said of the virtuous woman as a worker. (1) She works willingly (verse 13). Her duties are not drudgery. (2) She works to provide variety for her family (verse 14). (3) She is not slothful in her work (verses 15, 18). (4) She is wise

in her use of finances (verse 16). (5) She gives wholehearted effort to her work (verse 17). (6) She does menial tasks without complaint (verse 19). (7) She provides for all her family (verses 21, 22). (8) She contributes to the family finances by her wisdom in buying and selling and by her willingness to work (verse 24).

E. She is a person of excellent character. She has strength of heart, dignity of spirit, optimism in outlook, wisdom, and kindness of spirit (verses 25, 26). No wonder she is called "*a virtuous woman*."

III. PRAISE HER (Proverbs 31:28-31)

The praise of such a woman comes from four sources. (I) Her husband praises her, saying, "*Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all*" (verses 28, 29). She is chief among women to him.

(2) Her children praise her, rising up and calling her "*blessed*" (verse 28).

(3) God praises her with the testimony, "*Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised*" (verse 30). God praises her by declaring her worthy of praise.

(4) Her works praise her. "*Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates*" (verse 31). Her true beauty is in her character, which is expressed in her works.

The book of Proverbs begins with "*fear of the LORD*" (1:7) and ends with fearing the Lord (31:30). Fear of God is a spirit which reverences Him and delights to serve Him in truth.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth" (Joshua 24:14).

QUESTIONS

1. What is a "*virtuous*" woman?
2. Why is such a woman of such great value?
3. What does Proverbs 12:4 and 19:14 say of her?
4. How would you describe the virtuous woman as a wife?
5. How would you describe her as a mother?
6. How would you describe her as a neighbor?
7. How would you describe her as a worker?

8. What are her qualities of character?
9. Why is such a woman to be praised?
10. How can you cultivate those qualities in your life?