

Women of the Bible

Lesson Five: The Virtuous Woman

The last chapter of the book of Proverbs contains sayings that are attributed to “King Lemuel” (an unknown king or even a symbolic name meaning - “The king for God,” cf. Acts 1:1). Solomon, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit includes these sayings within his own book of Proverbs.



Introduction. The last portion of this chapter (Proverbs 31:10-31) deals with a description of one who is called a “virtuous woman” (“worthy” - ASV, “excellent” - NASB, “noble character” - NIV). This description serves as a powerful outline of what God desires of the Godly woman.

I. The “Virtuous Woman” Defined.

- A. The meaning of the Hebrew word *cha'il* (חַיִל) translated “virtuous” is “strength, efficiency.” It is used of armies, heroes and those mighty in strength and valor (*A Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 298).
 1. This word speaks to the virtue, courage, strength and efficiency of the godly woman.
- B. It has the basic idea of “strength and influence” (*The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament*, p. 334). This woman is of moral strength and character. She is not weak nor incapable. But exercises significant strength and influence over those around her.

II. The “Virtuous Woman’s” Character.

- A. **“Her husband trusts her”** (11a). The Godly woman can be trusted by her husband. He does not worry about what she does, or with whom she is associated because she demonstrates a character that is honorable and trustworthy.
- B. **“She does him good and not evil”** (12a). The worthy woman seeks the best for her household. She will not criticize and talk bad about her husband but honors him, to a degree that improves his standing among others (see vs. 23). This is not to say that she ignores sin, but rather that she does not emphasize his shortcomings in her mind or to others.
- C. **“Willingly works with her hands”** (13b). This woman is industrious. Her work is not done with regret but with a recognition of the importance of her duties and a heart willing to perform them.
- D. **“Rises while it is yet night”** (15a). Jesus is described as rising early to go to God in prayer (Mark 1:35). This reflects a premeditated interest in seeking communion with God before the day began. The virtuous woman meditates upon her effect upon her family and how to utilize the time of each day.

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- E. “Provides food for her household” (15b).** The New Testament teaches that a wife is to be a “keeper of the home” (Titus 2:5). A part of this involves providing food for her family. This is not excluding a family from eating at a restaurant, or a husband preparing (or helping in the preparation of) a meal, but this is primarily the responsibility of the wife.
- F. Her work (16-19).** Being a keeper of the home does not demand that a woman can never take care of business outside of the home. Yet, we should note that the tasks described in this text do not excuse (or lead her to neglect) the responsibilities in the home. Any work that a woman does outside of the home should never prevent a woman from meeting her other responsibilities within the home.
- G. “She reaches out her hand to the needy” (20b).** The woman of this chapter is generous and considerate of the needs of others. This could include the sick, the suffering, those mourning the loss of loved ones or other types of need. Her duties towards her family do not prevent this generosity.
- H. “She is not afraid of snow for her household” (21a).** While future dangers can come from many sources, the virtuous woman does what she can to prepare her family for the future.
- I. “Strength and honor are her clothing” (25a).** The Godly woman is not a “weak” or “repressed” woman. This is a woman of inner strength, outer industry and emotional fortitude.
- J. “She shall rejoice in time to come” (25b).** Preparation for the future does not mean that she is anxious and worried about the future. She looks to the future and sees reason to rejoice. This positive hope is vital for her to nurture a healthy family.
- K. “She opens her mouth with wisdom” (26a).** The Godly woman recognizes her responsibility in nurturing faith and godliness in her family. Paul shows that Timothy’s mother and grandmother were of this character (II Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15).
- L. “On her tongue is the law of kindness” (26b).** The virtuous woman is a kind woman. She is not harsh in speech or callous to the needs and concerns of others.
- M. “She watches over the ways of her household” (27a).** While the Bible teaches that the husband is the head of the house (Ephesians 5:23), it also teaches that a woman has significant authority within the home. Paul calls her a “keeper of the home” from the Greek word, *oikouros* (οἰκουρός) meaning “a watcher of the house.” She is told to “manage the house” (I Timothy 5:14) from the Greek word *oikodespoteo* (οἰκοδεσποτέω) meaning “to rule a household.” While this is under the headship of her husband, it is a role of authority nonetheless.
- N. “Does not eat the bread of idleness” (27b).** As we have already seen, this is not a lazy woman. Just as the Bible rebukes the husband who would be lazy (Ecclesiastes 10:18), the godly woman sees her role in the home and diligently seeks to carry it out.

Conclusion. We have seen that the Bible describes the virtuous woman as a caring, hard working, kind and considerate woman who seeks the best for her husband and family. This beautiful description serves as a wonderful example of what the Christian woman should strive to be (cf. I Corinthians 10:6).

