

## PROVERBS 31

## WHO CAN FIND A VIRTUOUS WOMAN?

Most commentators believe that Lemuel is Solomon. Indeed, it would be very fitting for Solomon to be sure to tell us here what his mother taught him, because he has already told us – in chapter 4:4 – what his father taught him. It is the duty of both mothers and fathers to teach their children that which is good, as well as how to avoid what is evil. Mothers, in particular, have a special opportunity, when their children are young and tender, of shaping and fashioning their minds well; and they would do well to not let this privileged opportunity slip away. And those who have grown up to maturity should often call to mind and make mention (as Solomon here does) of the good instructions which they received when they were children.

The wise mother tenderly gives her young prince a caution against the two great destroying sins of immorality and drunkenness, which – if he allowed himself to indulge in them – would certainly be his ruin. Rulers are especially exposed to temptations of this kind, and so they ought to double their guard; for if they wish to preserve their people from sin and uncleanness, they themselves must be patterns of purity. But the king's mother also counsels him here to do good. The prince was admonished to use his power, his knowledge, and his influence for good things, and to administer justice with care, courage, and compassion. He was especially obliged to speak up in cases of oppressed innocence.

The last page of the Book of Proverbs displays the full-length portrait of a true and noble heroine – a virtuous wife and mother. This model of worthy character is brought out in high relief, and finished with extraordinary minuteness. Verses 10-12 introduce the theme. They constitute a stately porch through which we enter the gorgeous interior galleries. The question, “Who can find a virtuous woman?” seems to indicate that few of the daughters of men fully attain the imitation of this model. As is usual with rare things, the price is high; it is “above rubies.” Obviously, the meaning is that a virtuous woman is worth more than the highest price that could be named! There is no standard by which her value can be expressed. “The heart of her husband trusts in her.” As the helpmeet which was designed and bestowed by our Father in heaven, “she will do him good and not evil all the days of his life.”

At the 13<sup>th</sup> verse, the details of the portrait of the “Proverbs 31 Woman” are painted beautifully. The purpose of the picture is to display the practical virtues that operate, day by day, in the common affairs of a virtuous woman's life. Many leafy branches – bearing useful fruit in abundance – wave before us in the wind, all throughout the chapter; and not until the very closing verses do we

**Outline of the chapter:**

- ❖ An exhortation to Lemuel, a young prince, to take heed of the sins which he would be tempted to – verses 1-9
- ❖ The description of a virtuous wife and mother – verses 10-31





reach the root of Godliness that nourishes them all! Let us look at some of the leading features of this portrait – some of the larger jewels in this woman’s crown. Her hands are full of useful occupations in her home, which are both simple and practical. She shows kindness and benevolence to the poor. She is not afraid of the snows of winter, because she foresees its approach and prepares to meet it. When she opens her lips to speak, words of discretion and prudence pour out. But another lovely feature of feminine excellence is added to the picture here: “The law of kindness is on her lips.” This is one grand fundamental of a true woman’s worth!

But the virtuous woman also “looketh well to the ways of her household.” A watchful superintendence of the household, with a view to encourage good and restrain evil in the members of the family, is a cardinal point in the character of a wife and mother.

Here is a general word to those who are parents of daughters. Your sacred, God-given privilege is to raise these precious girls to be such maidens of virtue! Beware of sacrificing practical instruction in solid responsibilities and attainments – which are to be used for the glory of God, in the management of their own homes in the future – for superficial and worthless policies and pastimes to please the eyes of the world. The world’s history teems with examples to teach us that seven devils may hide under the ample folds of all the fashionable accomplishments in the hollow heart of a worldly girl. Dear fathers and mothers! Sow the vital seed of God’s Word into your daughters’ hearts from their infancy, and fill their hands with useful employment. For her own sake, a girl’s parents should endeavor to make her skillful and keep her busy; for empty hours, empty hands, empty companions, empty words, and empty hearts draw in evil spirits – just as a vacuum draws in air. To have one’s hands busily occupied with good things is the best defense against the inroads of evil into the heart.

It is the virtuous woman’s faith in the Lord that sends forth these virtues, and then these virtues publish her praise! (verses 30-31) The concluding feature of her model-character is a graceful and proper termination to the Book of Proverbs as a whole. Its theme throughout is that *righteousness is the fruit of faith*. We must remember that *the Gospel is not a method of bringing people to heaven without righteousness, or with less righteousness than that which was demanded from the people of God in the Old Testament!* The actual holiness of His people is the purpose of the Lord in all ages, just as certainly as fruit is the goal of the farmer when he plants and waters his trees. The death of Christ for sin is the Divine Plan – not for dispensing with obedience from men – but for effectually obtaining it! Reconciliation is the road to righteousness. The Lord proclaims pardon and bestows peace, so that the forgiven rebels may submit and serve Him.

*Lord, we pray for wives, mothers, and daughters everywhere, that they may be given grace to aspire to the imitation of the virtuous woman in this chapter! Amen.*