

The Virtuous Woman

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

“And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account: Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all

those have I not found” (Ecclesiastes 7:26-28).

“A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones” (Proverbs 12:4).

“House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD” (Proverbs 19:14).

“And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman” (Ruth 3:11).

Fears God

Scripture emphasizes the fear of God over favour and beauty (Prov 31:30). Favour is often used to deceive men (Prov 2:16; 5:3; 6:24; 7:5,13-21), and beauty is not worth much by itself (Prov 11:22) and does not last long (Eccl 12:1; I Cor 7:36). And consider also that a beautiful woman will be more tempted to adultery (Ezek 16:15) and be a greater source of jealousy (Num 5:14). A wise wife must fear God (Prov 1:7; 9:10; Eccl 12:13).

The fear of God is a reverential intimidation by the Being and judgments of God and an awestruck appreciation for His favour and mercy. It may briefly be defined as hatred of evil (Prov 8:13), departure from evil (Prov 3:7), sacrificial desire to please God (Gen 22:12), supreme obedience (Exo 1:7), upright walk (Prov 14:2), delight in God’s commandments (Ps 112:1), singleness of heart (Col 3:22), and general submission (Eph 5:21). A virtuous woman will have overall behavior that becomes holiness (Titus 2:3).

It will bring marital blessings of supplied needs (Ps 34:9), advantage over wealth (Pr 15:16), riches, honour, life (Prov 22:4), preservation, happiness, blessing (Ps 128:1-4), confidence (Pr 14:26), longer life (Pr 10:27), fulfilled desires (Ps 145:19), God’s pleasure (Ps 147:11), God’s pity (Ps 103:13), God’s providence (Ps 33:18), God’s memory (Mal 3:16), wisdom (Ps 111:10), and the angel of the Lord (Ps 34:7).

Since the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 1:7; 9:10) and includes delight in His commandments (Ps 112:1), a woman that fears God will love and treat her husband with the wisdom God commands. A woman that fears God will also reject ideas about women that are contrary to God’s word. Because God perfectly designed the woman and marriage for the pleasure of the man (Gen 2:18; I Cor 11:9), a man would be a fool to not emphasize this first mark of a virtuous woman.

A woman's fear of God may be proved and trained by using the definition above and by testing her scripturally. Wise tests could include facing her with God's requirements in her finances, her friends, her appearance, her relationship to her parents, her hair, her personal habits, her temperament, her submission, her training of children, God's different standards for men and women, the holidays, etc.

Gracious

An extremely lofty and inclusive descriptive term for a virtuous woman is graciousness. It is defined as the quality of being pleasing and attractive; possessing charming and winning grace especially in manner; being courteous and polite with especially condescending courtesy; being merciful and compassionate; possessing grace or moral excellence; endowed with grace or charm of appearance; in a limited sense being graceful and elegant; characterized by kindness and courtesy especially being condescendingly kind, indulgent, and beneficent to inferiors. This is a woman who is never offensive or haughty, always discreet and modest, and is delightfully charming in every way. When we speak of a lovely woman intelligently, we speak of such a gracious woman that never behaves herself unseemly (I Cor 13:5). Simply summarized, graciousness is the keeping of Christ's "golden rule": Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

While scripture uses this term sparingly, God does acknowledge that a gracious woman retains her honour (Prov 11:16): she will not spoil her fragrant honour with a little folly (Eccl 10:1). A woman can be compared to a flower (S.S. 2:1-2). A gracious woman is most like a flower for the grace of her fashion (James 1:11). It is this adorning of a gracious spirit that makes a woman truly beautiful (Matthew 6:28-29; I Pet 3:3-4). Graciousness applies to the very attractive qualities of moral pureness and discreet speech (Prov 22:11). Kind and gracious speech is a great identifier of graciousness (Psalm 45:2; Luke 4:22; Eccl 10:12; Prov 16:13; 31:26). A beautiful woman without this gracious disposition to discretion is a very contrary and ugly thing (Prov 11:22).

Sober

God expects women to be sober (Titus 2:4; I Timothy 2:9,15; 3:11). Sobriety is primarily grave, serious, and solemn demeanour and speech indicating a serious mind or purpose. A sober woman will use humor infrequently (Job 29:24), avoid jesting and foolish talking (Eph 5:3-5), and never make a mock at sin (Prov 14:9). We must reject any resemblance to the cackling hens, laughing hyenas, or crackling thorns so popular today (Ecc 7:2-6). Television is an extremely dangerous evil in promoting foolishness and jesting as a popular form of entertainment in our generation. Wise men will guard against "sitcoms" and comedies from this source. Sobriety may also includes temperance relative to wine (Titus 2:3).

Loving

A virtuous woman will love her husband and her children (Tit 2:4). An overall evidence of a godly woman is charity (I Tim 2:15). Love is best measured by the concise description given by Paul (I Cor 13:4-7). A virtuous woman will suffer long (Prov 19:11), be kind (Prov 19:22; 31:12,20,26), does not envy (Prov 27:4), does not vaunt herself (Prov 13:10; I Cor 11:9; I Sam 25:41), is not puffed up (I Tim 2:9-14), does not behave herself unseemly (Prov 11:16; 27:15-16), seeks not her own (Prov 31:12-27), is not easily provoked (Prov 11:22; 14:29), thinks no evil (I Tim 6:4), does not rejoice in iniquity (Psalm 119:136; Tit 2:3), rejoices in the truth (I Tim 2:15; James 3:17), bears all things (Eph 5:24; I Pet 2:18-19), believes all things (Amos 3:3; I Cor 11:18), hopes all

things (I Pet 3:6; Psalm 123:2), and endures all things (Prov 31:12). Observe the emphasis on putting up with offences. Observe the emphasis on trust – there cannot be fear with true love (I John 4:18). Remember that proper love expresses itself God's way toward others (Rom 13:10). A virtuous woman will be a forgiving woman (Prov 10:12; 17:9) and a giving woman (II Cor 12:15).

DISCREET

God expects women to be discreet (Titus 2:5). Discretion is showing discernment or judgment in speech and action; judicious, prudent, circumspect, cautious; often especially that can be silent when speech would be inconvenient. Discretion involves using common sense, practical wisdom, and being generally reserved. It definitely restrains the baser emotions (Prov 19:11). The ability to rule one's spirit is greater than the ability to take a city (Prov 16:32), but the inability to do so is like a defenseless city (Prov 25:28). A slow spirit (Prov 12:16; 14:17,29; 15:18; 25:8; Eccl 7:9) and reservation in speech (Prov 10:19; 12:23; 17:28; 29:11) will do much. A beautiful woman without this virtue is a disgrace to her sex (Prov 11:22).

Chaste

Chastity or sexual purity is extremely important to a woman's character (Titus 2:5; I Pet 3:2). Virginity (Gen 24:16; Num 31:18; Deut 22:13-21; Lev 21:13-14; II Sam 13:18-19; II Cor 11:2) and fidelity (Num 5:11-31; Ezek 16:38; Matt 1:19) are highly regarded in scripture. A woman who is not a virgin may well be unfaithful again and will often cause jealousy and resentment on the part of her husband. Speech (Eph 5:4), appearance (Prov 7:10; Is 3:16-26; Jer 3:3), and innocent conduct (Deut 25:11-12) must also be chaste.

Keeper At Home

God expects women to emphasize their household duties over any professional career or social life (Tit 2:5; Prov 14:1; 31:27; Eccl 10:18). The "keeper at home" phrase primarily condemns idleness, wandering about, tattling, and being busybodies (Ezek 16:39; I Tim 5:13-14): it does not condemn working outside the home. While the various duties of keeping a home are very important for virtuous women, the text requires keepers AT home, not keepers OF homes. Women must keep their priorities straight: husband, children, home, then outside business. For example, the responsibility for women to love their children (Tit 2:4) must be honored above outside pursuits. Providing food, clothing, and shelter for children does not adequately satisfy God's requirements for mothers. While scripture allows servants and governors to assist with the children, a mother must be a lover (Prov 4:3) and trainer of children (Prov 1:8; 6:20). Christian women must guard even righteous activities with other women from interfering with their duties at home. A virtuous woman will carefully guard her use of the telephone, which has become a curse to many women. Women who like to be about away from home have the appearance of harlots (Prov 7:11-12).

A virtuous woman will work diligently outside the home (Prov 31:16,24), if she has her higher duties fulfilled. The present generation's idea of Christian women as decorative fixtures at home is foreign to the scriptures. It developed from the Catholic superstition of Mary as the epitome of womanhood. Sex, sweat, dirt, hard work, and so forth are all opposed to this perverted image. God made the woman to work and help her husband. Keeping a house with our modern conveniences is not nearly a full time job. If the children are grown, in school, or trained to help keep the house, it would often be the wise and prudent thing to seek some outside

employment.

Good

A virtuous woman is a good woman (Titus 2:5; Prov 31:12). A good woman is a woman with good works – things done very well morally, charitably, and practically (I Tim 2:9-10). This provides her with adorning superior to any adorning of her physical appearance.

Goodness surely refers to the moral character of her conduct (I Pet 3:6 cp 3:2). Abigail was known as a woman of good understanding (I Sam 25:3). Deacons' wives should be examples, so she should be faithful in all things (I Tim 3:11). Good women will be sexually chaste (Prov 6:23-26), cheerfully obedient (Prov 21:19), and diligently helpful (Prov 31:27). Her husband may truly trust her (Prov 31:11-12).

Dorcas was known as a virtuous woman by her good works of charity (Acts 9:36-39; Prov 31:20). Widows are to have such a reputation to be supported by the church (I Tim 5:10). One woman gained perpetual honor by her good work toward Christ (Matt 26:6-13). The better off a woman is financially, the more she should be known for such goodness (I Tim 6:17-18).

A woman can also be good by her proficiency in her duties. We speak of good housekeepers, good mothers, good wives, good lovers, good cooks, good shoppers, good organizers, etc. A virtuous woman strives to maximize her potential. The virtuous woman of Proverbs strengthened herself and knew that her efforts were good (Prov 31:17-18).

Obedient

A virtuous woman is an obedient woman (Tit 2:5). She will submit to her husband's wishes as her duties (Gen 3:16; I Pet 3:1-2,5-6). She will recognize that she was made for her husband (Gen 2:18; I Cor 11:9; I Tim 2:13) to help him. She will not consider marriage an equal partnership. Look out for disobedient (Esther 1:12), brawling, and contentious women (Prov 21:9,19; 27:15). She will easily learn in silence and with all subjection (I Tim 2:11-12) and submit to the instruction of her husband (I Cor 14:34-35). She will give evidence of her respect for authority in the way she submits to and reverences civil government (I Pet 2:13-17), froward masters (I Peter 2:18-20), parents (Eph 6:1-3), and pastor (Heb 13:7; I Thess 5:13).

A woman who does not honour her father (Eph 6:1-3) will generally not reverence her husband (Eph 5:33). Women that disregard the counsel of their fathers are like harlots (Prov 2:17). Consider the example of Jephtha's daughter as a supreme example of a virtuous young girl (Judges 11:36). A woman may be judged quite accurately by the reverence, obedience, and affection she shows her father. It is important that a woman give any children a good example of parental honor.

Prudent

A prudent woman is a gift from God (Prov 19:14). Prudence is wisdom (Prov 16:21), skill in adapting means to ends (Eccl 10:10), careful to follow the most politic and profitable course (Prov 22:3; 25:8), and having or exercising sound judgment in practical affairs (Prov 31:27). It includes circumspection, discretion, and being worldly-wise. A virtuous woman is not ignorant (Prov 31:16,24; I Samuel 25:3). Naivete is a great curse of women (I Tim 2:14; II Tim 3:6; Matt 23:14; I Pet 3:7). Prudence is proving things before believing them (Prov

14:15; I Thess 5:21). A prudent woman will understand and consider the consequences of actions (Prov 14:8; 22:3).

Modest

Godly women are modest women. Modesty as used by Paul in his instruction to women (I Tim 2:9-10) primarily intends a moderate, reserved, bashful, humble, and quiet attitude particularly in relation to men. A virtuous woman will not be bold, forward, coarse, or suggestive. Modesty includes the shamefaced appearance Paul commands. This appearance reflects her knowledge and memory of her order in creation and her miserable failure in Eden (I Tim 2:11-14). Peter describes this modesty by a meek and quiet spirit (I Peter 3:4).

A virtuous woman will also be modest by avoiding sexually provocative apparel and conduct. A virtuous woman must avoid the attire and actions of an harlot (Prov 7:10-15). She will guard against exaggerated physical appearance (Is 3:16-24).

No False Accuser

A virtuous woman will not falsely accuse or slander others (Tit 2:3; I Tim 3:11). Many women have a problem with whispering and backbiting (I Tim 5:13). God has no use for it at all (Lev 19:16). A virtuous woman uses her tongue wisely and kindly (Prov 31:26). She will not be a busybody in other men's matters (I Pet 4:15), and she will guard against any appearance of flattery (Prov 20:19). Remember that the mouth gives evidence of what is in the heart (Matt 12:34).

Teacher

A virtuous woman must be a teacher. She must teach her children (Prov 1:8; 6:20), other women (Tit 2:3-5), other members in the church (Gal 6:1-2; I Thess 5:14; Heb 3:12-13; 10:24-25), and even evangelistic contacts (Acts 18:26; I Pet 3:15). A righteous woman will invest in others (Prov 10:11,21; 11:30; 27:9,17). A meek and quiet spirit cannot be used as an excuse for not being able to talk to others. The virtuous woman communicates wisely and kindly (Prov 31:26).

Not Amazed

A woman is to fear, reverence, and obey her husband; but she must avoid any amazement – the condition of being mentally paralyzed, bewildered, or perplexed to the extent of doubting proper action (I Pet 3:6). Submissive fear of a husband should not confuse a woman's judgment as to her duty to God. Abigail was a woman of good understanding (I Sam 25:3), but she did not submit to her husband in a matter that was not pleasing to God (I Sam 25:19,25,36). Since women are followers by nature (especially of their husbands), this virtue can be severely tested when the husband falls into sin. Women will **have** opportunities often to reverently rebuke their husbands or kindly refuse to participate with him in sin. As men and women must obey God before kings and civil authority (Ex 1:17; Josh 2:3-6; Acts 5:29), so wives must obey God before their husbands. She should have the ability to think and teach other women the virtues of a godly woman (Tit 2:3-5).

Reverent

A virtuous woman will reverence her husband (Eph 5:33). She will recognize that God made man first (Gen 2:18; I Tim 2:13), man is the image and glory of God (I Cor 11:7), she was made for the glory of man (I Cor 11:7-9), and she is under his God-given rule (Gen 3:16). It will not be strange for her to call her husband lord (I Pet 3:6). She will consider his favour a blessing and privilege, not a right (Ruth 2:10,13; I Kings 1:15-21). She will accept God's double standard relative to marital privilege and duty. She will make her greatest care in life to please her husband (I Cor 7:34).

Bold

A virtuous woman is a confident and courageous woman. While the wicked are fearful, the righteous are bold (Prov 28:1). Guilt for sin is the great difference between courage and fear. Jael was blessed in scripture above all women for driving a stake through sleeping Sisera's head (Judges 5:24-27). Consider the boldness to engage in commercial real estate transactions (Prov 31:16). A virtuous woman must be able to teach other women how to be virtuous (Tit 2:3-4). A woman's courage will be severely tested when her husband falls into error or encourages her to join him in some sin. A virtuous woman will help her husband (Gen 2:18; Eccl 4:10) by trying to save him and refusing to join him. Virtuous women will volunteer for jobs and show initiative (Prov 31:20). Consider Lydia's boldness in providing lodging for Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke (Acts 16:15).

Good Name

A good name is important as evidence of her reputation (Prov 22:1; Eccl 7:1). In proving character the opinion of even the world has its proper place (I Tim 3:7; Acts 6:3). It is manifestly impossible for a virtuous woman to keep her virtue a secret – she will be known. Boaz married Ruth based on the reputation she had in the city (Ruth 3:11). A woman that is in favour with God will also be in favour with men (I Sam 2:26; Luke 2:52; III John 12). Using Jesus Christ as an example, it is obvious that wicked men will not always hold a good man in high regard (John 7:20).

Good Friends

A virtuous woman will associate with virtuous men and women. A woman's friends will indicate much about her own character (Prov 13:20; I Cor 15:33). A woman that fears the Lord will company with those who fear the Lord (Ps 119:63). It is a true proverb, "Birds of a feather flock together." God highly esteems those who associate and communicate with others about Him (Mal 3:16). A woman who has fools for friends is at risk of death (Prov 9:6).

Sexual

A virtuous woman knows that the marriage relationship makes all natural sexual expression honourable and undefiled (Heb 13:4). The very thought of Mary being a perpetual virgin is totally contrary to scripture (Ps 69:8), nature (Rom 1:26), and especially a woman with any virtue (Prov 31:12). She further understands that marriage creates obligations and rights to any sexual expression necessary to avoid the temptation of fornication (I Cor 7:1-5). She will learn to satisfy her husband as completely as possible, and she knows that any independent restraint of this duty constitutes defrauding of a husband.

She will not be ashamed of nakedness (Gen 2:25), enjoyment of personal sexual pleasures (S.S. 2:5-7), desire for personal sexual pleasures (S.S. 5:4-6), nor allowing her husband to delight in her sexually (S.S. 4:1-7; 7:1-9). She will be proud and glad to use her body to gratify her husband (Pr 5:19; S.S. 8:10). A virtuous woman will make great efforts to maximize her appearance and erotic ability for her husband. She will exploit her sexuality as far as possible for his pleasure.

Spiritual

A virtuous woman must be born of the Spirit of God (I John 2:29) and walk according to the Spirit (Gal 5:25). Many women have a distorted view of what a spiritual woman actually is. The current idea is a superficial, socially-active woman that is either Charismatic in doctrine or practice or borders on it. The Puritanical idea is an introverted, self-deprecating, guilt-ridden, and scripture-quoting woman that values spiritual thoughts over practical righteousness. Both ideas are wrong. Many women consciously or unconsciously hide their practical failures behind a facade of “spirituality” to try and save face.

A spiritual woman is a woman that walks in the Spirit. This means she bears the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-25). She will love as the Spirit teaches; she will have joy as the Spirit teaches; and so forth. She will emphasize over any undefinable “spirituality” the necessity of diligently keeping the specific and practical instructions of God’s word to women. Observe carefully that Proverbs 31:10-31 and Titus 2:3-5 are lists of practical responsibilities for women. Observe carefully the lack of any “spiritual” emphasis that would support the Roman Catholic concept of womanhood as pictured by their grotesque caricature of Mary. Cloistered nuns reading scripture, praying, and doing works of charity in a convent are not virtuous women. A woman that serves her husband well, works like a Trojan, keeps a great house, and stays physically attractive is far more pleasing to God than the woman that reads her Bible and sits around thinking about God and neglects these duties.

A virtuous woman will be able to converse with her husband about spiritual things (I Cor 14:34-35). She will delight in the Lord (Psalm 37:4), commune with her own heart about the Lord (Psalm 4:4), pray to the Lord (I Thess 5:17), and speak to others about him (Mal 3:16). As a virtuous woman, she will be noble as the Bereans and search the scriptures to prove her doctrine (Acts 17:11).

Virtuous

Proverbs 31:10-31 is the most definitive and exquisite summary of a virtuous woman found in scripture. In Hebrew, its twenty-two verses each begin with a successive letter of the Hebrews alphabet to form an acrostic, much like Psalm 119. It should be thoroughly learned by every girl before she becomes a woman.

A virtuous woman will manifest many or all the marks of the woman described here, which marks of virtue will indeed make her an extremely rare thing (31:10). Men cannot find such women naturally: they are a gift from God (Prov 19:14). Men could increase the number of these women, if they would search for and require such virtues in their wives and daughters; but most men ignorantly prefer the vanity of beauty and the deceitfulness of favour (31:30). The curse of a bad woman is well summarized by Solomon, who tried a thousand women (Eccl 7:26-28). A similar rhetorical question for men may be found in Proverbs 20:6.

She will be trustworthy to the extent that her husband will not have any doubts or fears concerning her (31:11). The virtuous woman may be trusted sexually, personally, domestically, economically, spiritually, etc.

While sexual confidence is included, the emphasis is on domestic confidence as the verse and context show. Confidence in a wife is one of the greatest blessings in life. Contrast this with a poor Goodman (7:18-20), Potiphar (Gen 39:7), Jacob (Gen 31:19), and Samson (Judges 16:15-17). A woman that cannot be trusted is as rottenness in a man's bones (Prov 12:4), a toothache and a sprained ankle (Prov 25:19). Women generally cannot be trusted, and it is this fact that makes the virtuous woman valuable. A virtuous woman so satisfies the desires and needs of her husband that he has no motive to seek anything elsewhere.

She will make her husband's pleasure and profit the great ambitions of her life (31:12). She will do him good sexually, personally, domestically, economically, spiritually, etc. A married virtuous woman takes great care to please her husband (I Cor 7:34). Contrast this great gift of a help meet for Adam (Gen 2:18) with the bitter cry of Solomon (Eccl 7:26-28). Consider the evil done by Eve (Gen 3:6), Michael (II Sam 6:20), Solomon's wives (I Kings 11:1-5), Jezebel (I Kings 21:25), Job's wife (Job 2:9), brawling women (Prov 17:1; 21:9; 25:24), and contentious women (Prov 19:13; 21:19; 27:15-16).

She is a willing worker that shows initiative without prodding (31:13). She will seek profitable employment without it being handed to her. She has a will to work and does so cheerfully and contentedly. Observe that even the basic raw materials are sought out and used. Manual labor is not beneath her. She would cut the grass, wash the car, bake from scratch, upholster furniture, or any other basic duty.

She does not settle for convenience, but for excellence (31:14). While MacDonalds is fast and easy, she would usually rather fix a balanced and nutritious meal. She recognizes that "haste makes waste," and like the merchants' ships she patiently pursues an excellent objective.

She sacrifices willingly for the care of her household (31:15). Inconvenience does not anger or frustrate her. She is not slothful when it comes to sleep (Prov 6:6-11). She is willing and able to rise before others and serve them. Virtuous women fix breakfast for their husbands regardless of how early they rise. Even the less honorable members of the household are provided for by this ambitious woman.

She is wise enough to form economic plans and bring them to pass (31:16). The example provided here is of commercial real estate development. She is able to consider a field: she locates the opportune field, determines its cost, forecasts its yield, measures her risk, and determines the economic validity of her decision. Because of her reputation with her husband (31:11-12), she has access to sufficient funds to purchase the field. With the purchase complete, she shows the necessary diligence to complete the project (Prov 12:27). The liberty to make such an investment is by reputation and previous earnings – the vineyard is funded by the "fruit of her hands." Christianity is no excuse for women to be ignorant homebodies. Here we see the virtuous woman busy with business outside the home.

She takes measures to identify, develop, and preserve her abilities (31:17). Observe that it is not God that strengthens her arms and loins here: she does it herself.

A virtuous woman is not content burying her talents; she wants to develop and exploit them to their potential (Matt 25:14-30). Christian women should use older women, reading, college, seminars, and other sources of learning to increase their wisdom. They should use spas, clinics, books, and classes to improve their physical knowledge, appearance, and ability.

She is confident in her labor and applies herself very diligently (31:18). Humility and modesty do not deny effective and hard work (I Cor 15:10). A virtuous woman is a confident woman. Timidity, false humility, and

fear are not Christian virtues. A skilled and gracious hostess knows that the meal is well prepared.

She is not averse to menial tasks that are easily delegated to others (31:19). She is not beyond manual labor. She does not have to have every new appliance or device. She is very willing to “do it from scratch.” She will work cheerfully without the latest from Better Homes and Gardens.

She is gracious, considerate, and hospitable toward those less fortunate (31:20). She does not console herself that she is available for the poor and needy. She stretches and reaches out her hand to them. A virtuous woman does not wait to be asked to help: she volunteers and does the job without prodding.

She prudently prepares her household against potential adversity (31:21). A virtuous woman is prudent by looking ahead and taking action accordingly (Prov 22:3). She is not fearful of circumstances as most Phlegmatics, because she has made proper preparations in case of evil.

She does not neglect her public appearance but maximizes her attractiveness (31:22). Virtuous women have time for themselves. They remember that they were created for their husbands, and they always take time to be physically attractive for him. The woman is the glory of the man (I Cor 11:7), and she should be glorious for him. They are not dowdy. Modesty in dress and appearance never intends a shabby or unattractive appearance. Virtuous women that God blessed with beauty were beautiful to look upon (Gen 12:11; 24:16; 26:7). Virtuous women are attractive to behold. Consider the place of silk and purple in scripture (Esth 8:15; Ezek 16:13; Luke 16:19; Rev 18:12). Virtuous women are not fat, skinny, shabby, sloppy, casual, plain, boring, or anything like these. Their clothing should guard against excessive emphasis on the outward appearance (I Pet 3:3-4) and provocative attire that would inflame evil passions (Prov 7:10; Is 3:16-24).

She is an asset to her husband’s reputation (31:23). It has been said, “Behind every great man is a great woman.” A virtuous woman will make her husband great. She does this by relieving him of household duties, giving him perfect peace of mind, always supporting and never nagging, and earning good income on the side to boost their combined earnings. Since man needs a helper (Gen 2:18), a good woman can make a good man great. A virtuous woman will be a crown to her husband (Prov 12:4). A virtuous woman will help her husband realize the four benefits of companionship (Eccl 4:9-12). He will be known for his great blessing from God. On the other hand, an evil woman can easily destroy a man (Eccl 7:26-28).

She is wise and diligent in pursuing economic success for her household (31:24). Observe with this text the heavy emphasis on the virtuous woman’s industry. We have in this single verse mention of manufacturing, distribution, and selling.

She understands the importance of hard and honest conduct now for future rejoicing (31:25). She does not sacrifice the future on the altar of the present. Retaining honour manifests her gracious nature (Prov 11:16). Note here the importance of character for her adorning (I Tim 2:9-10; I Pet 3:3-4). She shall rejoice for her prudent provision, her righteous life, her retirement benefits, and the praise of others (31:28).

For all her diligence and accomplishment, she is still wise and kind in her speech (31:26). A gracious woman is not haughty, distant, or froward with others; she is condescending (Rom 12:16). Instead of a sarcastic and cutting tongue (Prov 12:18), she is known for gracious lips (Prov 22:11). A virtuous woman does use her mouth: She is a tree of life to others (Prov 11:30). She shows great discretion and wisdom in speech, and an internal law rules her tongue with kindness. Proper speech is a very wonderful thing (Prov 15:23; 24:26; 25:11).

She is circumspect in overseeing her household and works diligently to provide their needs (31:27). She is a

good planner and manager by looking ahead and being well prepared for any contingencies (Prov 22:3). Such is a wise woman – using circumspection to redeem her time (Eph 5:15-16). When she sees that something needs to be done, she is not slack in applying herself for its completion. She does not destroy her house through lazy hands (Prov 14:1; Eccl 10:18). Observe that she looks well after her household, not after the houses of others.

Her behaviour merits praise from both her children and husband (31:28). Virtue cannot be hidden: it will be known and recognized by those witnessing or participating in its blessing. A virtuous woman is a sacrificial lover of her husband and children, and they will speak the praise of her whom has given her life for them. A wise woman will not despair of her life when she does not receive the recognition that will yet come (II Cor 12:15).

She excels all women in her virtues (31:29). This verse is the praise uttered by her children and husband as indicated by the use of the second person. There are a few good women, but there are very few women like the woman described here. Consider the two main sources for differences among women – the gifts of God and personal application of those gifts (Matt 25:14-30).

The two most popular criteria for measuring women are compared to God's standard (31:30). Favor is deceitful as Solomon knew well (Prov 6:24), and beauty is vain without discretion (Prov 11:22) and when age takes its toll (Eccl 12:1). But the fear of the Lord provides the basis for a virtuous woman. The fear of God will reject all ideas of men regarding women and will focus instead on what the scriptures reveal. The fear of God will direct a woman to treat her husband, her children, and others as scripture teaches. By the context, the fear of the Lord is defined here as the diligent keeping of practical duties.

A virtuous woman should be compensated with some of the profit of her labors (31:31). While she labors for her husband and family, she should receive some of her efforts as a reward. Notice carefully that she is not to receive ALL OF it: she is to receive OF it. Her labors are for others, and it is their discretion that determines her share. A good woman should not be hid by her husband or family. She should have public recognition for her accomplishments. A good man will brag on his wife, if she has the character of a virtuous woman.