

The Woman of Proverbs 31

Devotion read by

Pam Barlow, 8/12/2024

A devotion from the book: "Prayer through the Eyes of Women of the Bible"

Authors: Ann Spangler and Jean E. Syswerda

A woman without a name, she is in some sense every woman who seeks to live a worthy life.

Her Character

She represents the fulfillment of a life lived in wisdom.

Her Joy

To be praised by her husband and children as a woman who surpasses all others.

Authors Message

Proverbs brims with less-than-glowing descriptions of women. There are wayward wives, prostitutes, loud women, defiant women, wives who are like a continual drip on a rainy day, women whose feet never stay home, brazen-faced women and even a woman so repulsive she is compared to a gold ring in a pig's snout! Any woman reading Proverbs may be tempted to conclude that its

male authors despised women. But to balance things out there are at least a few odious descriptions of men, including scoundrels, chattering fools, and sluggards. And proverbs actually opens and closes with positive portrayals of women: first as wisdom personified and then as a woman who can do no wrong.

But just who was this woman on a pedestal described in Proverbs 31? The poem describes a woman with a large household to direct. She was hard working, enterprising, wise, skilled, generous, thoughtful of others, dignified, God-fearing and a tremendous credit to her husband. Is she, as many think, a picture of the ideal wife and mother?

The description of the woman in Proverbs 31 actually offers a refreshing contrast to other ancient depictions of women, which tend to portray them in more frivolous and decorative terms. Still the perfect woman of Proverbs 31 hasn't always been a friend to ordinary women. In fact, she has sometimes been rubbed into the faces of lesser women by critical husbands and preachers. What woman could ever measure up to her? And is a woman's worth to be measured only by what she can accomplish in the domestic sphere? Or was the woman in Proverbs 31 a symbol of all the contributions a woman makes within the culture of her day? Regardless of how you answer these questions, there is more to her story than simply being the ideal wife and mother.

The woman of proverbs 31 may well be meant to inspire both men and women with a picture of what a virtuous life is capable of producing – shelter for others, serenity, honor, prosperity, generosity, confidence about the future – true blessedness. Who wouldn't want to be like such a woman? Who wouldn't sing her praises?

A wife of noble character who can find?

She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.

She brings him good, not harm, all the day of her life. . . .

She is clothed with strength and dignity;

she can laugh at the days to come.

She speaks with wisdom,

And faithful instruction is on her tongue. . . .

Her children arise and call her blessed;

Her husband also, and he praises her:

"Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all."

Proverbs 31: 10-12, 25-26, 28-29

The Lord gives wisdom, and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Proverbs 2:6

Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.

Proverbs 4:7

Wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.

Proverbs 8:11

Authors Prayer

Lord, you know better than I the kind of heart in which wisdom grows best –One in which patience, faith, and humility are there to nourish it. Help me cultivate a heart in which wisdom can quickly take root and flourish. Let wisdom be so much a part of my life that it produces a shelter for others.