"BE A VIRTUOUS WOMAN"
PROVERBS 31:10-31
3/4/06

INTRODUCTION:

Proverbs 31:10-31 literally describes the ABC's of a woman of excellence. The Hebrew paints a portrait of a virtuous woman by means of an acrostic, using all 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Each verse begins with a successive Hebrew letter (like Ps. 119), from (aleph) to (taw).

"The whole passage is the hallowing of domestic life, a directory for wives and mothers, a beautiful ideal of how noble a thing a busy mother's life may be, an exhibition to young men of what they should seek, and a reminder for what younger girls should aim" (cited from "The Challenge" - Robert D. Foster, p. 31)

V. 10

Not every woman makes a good wife.

"Find" = Prov. 18:22 - "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord." (cp. Ecc. 7:26).

"Virtue" = to have <u>moral strength</u>, to be of good <u>quality</u> in every aspect, to have noble and upright character.

Money can't buy virtue!

Virtue comes from God.

Ruth 3:11 - Boaz testified of Ruth: "For all the city of my people doth know that thou art a <u>virtuous</u> woman."

Prov. 12:4 - "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones."

A virtuous woman is a more precious possession than all earthly things which are valuable. She is a rare fortune!

PROPOSITION:Ladies: You should desire to <u>be a virtuous woman!</u>

I. ARE YOU <u>TRUSTWORTHY</u>? (v. 11-12)

(Can your husband's heart rest in the fact that you are not deceitful or unfaithful in any way?)

V. 11

Can your husband trust you? Or do you sneak behind his back?

If your husband can't trust you to be honest, sincere, loyal and faithful, whom can he trust?

But you may justify your sneaking by saying: "My husband is not saved."

--Maybe that's the reason why he isn't (cp. I Pet. 3:1-6)

--Where in the Bible does it teach doing things behind his back, regardless of his spiritual condition?

The only time you must disobey your husband is if he asks you to do something sinful. "Wives submit...as unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:22).

Abraham could trust Sarah!

"Spoil" = she won't rob or ruin what he worked to provide.

"She won't blow his paycheck."

The husband may bring home much or little, but his wife keeps the family possessions scrupulously together, and even increases them!

V. 12

She is honest not deceitful.
She is holy not defiled.

II. ARE YOU A HARD WORKER? (v. 13-19)

(Or have you fallen into the trap of laziness?)

A.SHE FINDS PLEASURE IN HER WORK (V. 13)

V. 13

"Willingly" = "to take pleasure in"

"With pleasure (joy) she works with her hands."

She loves working. It satisfies her to get things done.

She uses her hands. She is industrious. Not afraid to crack her finger nails or ruin her polish.

B.SHE GOES THE EXTRA MILE IN HER WORK (V. 14)

V. 14

She is capable of going great distances to go grocery shopping.

No doubt she gets the best deals, purchases in quantity, etc.

She's thrifty.

C.SHE MAKES SACRIFICES FOR HER WORK (V. 15)

V. 15

She gets up early and stays up late because she places the care for her household above her own comfort.

D.SHE WISELY PLANS AND PREPARES FOR HER WORK (V. 16)

V. 16

Because she is a woman who can be trusted by her husband (v. 11), she can be trusted to wisely handle (invest) the family's money.

She purchases some land and plants a garden.

E.SHE RECEIVES PHYSICAL STRENGTH AND STAMINA BECAUSE OF HER WORK (V. 17)

V. 17

She does not get her strength from "pumping iron" but by work!

F.SHE IS TIRELESS IN HER WORK (V. 18-19)

V. 18

Her merchandise (produce of juice from vineyard [v. 16]) is good (profitable).

Because she is being blessed (reaping good) for her hard work, this spurs her on (excites her) to do even more work - even late into the night.

Do you ever notice that when things are going well, you feel like doing even more (a sudden burst of energy, second wind)

She is a tireless worker (v. 15, 18, 19). (She sacrifices sleep).

III. ARE YOU GENEROUS? (v. 20-22)

(Or are you selfish?)

A.SHE GIVES TO OTHERS

V. 20

She is not narrow-hearted. She does not limit her care to the circle of what is her own, but in love reaches out far beyond this circle (Delitzch, p. 333)

Her attitude is not, "I worked for it, why don't you?!"

But she recognizes that she has been blessed by God, so she becomes a blessing to others.

She is not selfish. She does not stop with meeting her family's needs, she extends help to others in need!

She gives to those who can't repay her (pure motives).

She doesn't think she is to important to help the poor and needy.

She could say, "It's my money, I earned it, and I will spend it on myself." Rather, she gives and gives and gives!

She not only gives gifts, but also gives a helping hand.

The thought of verse 20 is also an offering of her hands to help the poor and needy.

She is willing to help them, serve them. She is offering a willing hand! She has a servant's heart.

As if she weren't busy enough, she goes a step further and serves others.

Praise God if you serve your family. A double hallelujah for you who also help other families.

B.SHE GIVES TO HER FAMILY

V. 21

"Scarlet" = lit. "scarlets" (plural), referring not only to the best material available, but also to double thickness (cp. LXX)

NOTE: Advanced preparation and planning

C.SHE PROVIDES FOR HERSELF

V. 22

After she has taken care of everyone else, she meets her needs.

"Coverings of tapestry" = either means 1) covers (blankets) for the beds in her home; or
2) coverings (in the sense of lined overcoats; cp. LXX)

IV. ARE YOU A BLESSING (an asset or plus)? (v. 23-25)

(Or are you a burden or detriment to your husband and children living for Christ?)

Largely due to the wife, her husband is not a bum! Her husband has a high position and good acquaintances (elders).

"Gates" = "The place in the city where the respected men sat to judge and discuss local affairs " (Ryrie) Public business transpired at the city gate (cp. Ruth 4:1)

V. 23

Because of her virtue, her husband has a well-known, reputable name.

When he sits among the elders deciding the affairs of the city, he has a weighty voice among them. Why? His house is in order. He has a godly wife.

Behind every good man is a good woman - backing him up, cheering for him, giving him a good reputation.

I wonder how many potential preachers (deacons, etc.) have been disqualified because of their wives?

V. 24

She is a blessing to her husband because she is not only thrifty with the money her husband makes, she also adds to the income (without it interfering with her domestic responsibilities!)

She is a "keeper (worker) at home" (Tit. 2:5).

V. 25

Her character is what makes her a blessing.

She has strength (power) over changing times (the changes of temporal circumstances).

She has honor (dignity) in that she is elevated above the trials that comes the way of her family.

Therefore, she can look confidently into the future.

She knows the unchanging principle that "You reap what you sow" (Gal. 6:7)

"She shall rejoice in time to come" = "she smiles (laughs) at the future"

She has no anxiety (fear) because she has worked hard and made prior preparations for her family (the are well taken care of).

She does not live from "hand to mouth." She plans. She gets prepared.`

EX: ant that prepares for the winter in the summer (Prov. 6:8).

V. DO YOUR WORDS EDIFY? (v. 26)

(Or do you tear down and destroy with your tongue?)

V. 26a

She thinks before she speaks.

If it won't build up others, she does not utter it!

Her words are not vain (empty, meaningless chatter), but they are practical. They meet needs. They do something beneficial.

Eph. 4:29 - "Let no corrupt communication ... good to the use of edifying..."

Single men: Beware of women who can't control their tongue!

V. 26b

"Law" = Torah - Instruction

As a mother, she instructs her children in a pleasant way, in a loving way, in a gracious way.

"Kindness" = devoted love; she is not the kind of woman where you listen in suspense, wondering what will come out of her mouth.

She faithfully speaks words that are kind, gentle, comforting, soothing. Her speech is graceful, merciful, and compassionate.

VI. IS YOUR FAMILY (household) YOUR PRIORITY? (v. 27-29)
(Or do you live for self-pleasure?)

V. 27

"Looketh well" = she watches over. She is constantly on the look out

Her eyes are turned everywhere; she is at one time here, at another there, to look after all with her own eyes (Delitzch, p. 339).

She does not allow what needs to get done to go undone, while she folds her hands and sits down watching TV or reading books.

She believes in "work before pleasure."

Her interest is not in self-indulgence but her family.

Sad to say, today women are living for their career, their appearance, their own personal interests, their security, etc.

Prov. 14:1 - "Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands."

This godly woman lives for her husband and children (v. 28) (cp. Titus 2:4-5, where the aged women are commanded to teach the younger women to be "sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.")

V. 28

When you make your family your priority, they will respect you for it.

Her children rise up in reverential honor and say that she has been blessed by God. (Today, being "Mother's Day," should remind you of the divinely inspired words, "Honor thy mother" (Ex. 20:12).) Her husband also says this, and he goes a step further and praises her.

You might say: "My husband never praises me." Why should he? Are you this kind of woman?

If you are a virtuous woman and your husband still doesn't praise you, then he is a fool! God will deal with him like Nabal, who had a virtuous wife (Abigail). God killed

Nabal (I Sam. 25:38) and Abigail became the wife of King David, who did respect her character.

VII. DO YOU REALLY <u>FEAR GOD</u>? (v. 30)
(Or are you worldly?)

V. 30

"Favor" = charm

External loveliness has deceived many a man.

It is vain -1) It doesn't last
2)It doesn't reveal what's inside

The true value of anything is measured by how long it lasts (EX: gold) and how genuine it is (EX: diamonds).

TURN TO: I Peter 3:1-4 (NOTE: 1) Purity 2) Fear of God 3) internal beauty)

Proverbs ends the same way it began, stressing the importance of the fear of God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7)

Her fear of God (beautiful character) is the <u>key</u> to her virtue!

This is her <u>foundation</u>, root, center core.

--She did not sneak on her husband because she feared God.

--She did not waste the money God gave her because she feared God

--She did not cheat on her husband because she feared God.

--She did not commit adultery because she feared God

--She did not lie in bed all morning because she feared God.

--She did not tear her family down with her speech because she feared God.

--She did not destroy her husband's reputation because she feared God.

--She did not train up rebellious children because she feared God.

CONCLUSION:

V. 31

This verse is a request to God to reward her according to what she deserves.

What she sowed, she will reap!

She will be known and praised by others (not that this was her motive, but this is the result).

She will "rejoice in time to come" (v. 25).

Ladies: You are building your own future today.

"The woman you are today affects the woman you will someday be" (Dr. Ben Strohbehn).

You can't just live however you want and this that "when you are ready" you will let God suddenly change you overnight.

You are reaping today what you sowed yesterday.

Don't ruin your tomorrow by ruining today!

Decide to change today so you won't have regret in your tomorrows.

In our selfish culture, with ERA, women's lib, etc., and the "I gotta be me" attitude - it takes a real woman of character to stand up against our society's philosophy.

The world may change, but God's plan for wives/mothers does not!

When you see an unusual son, nine times out of ten, you will discover an unusual mother. George Washington had a pious and devoted mother; the mother of Nero was a murderess. (Foster, p. 31)

Consider Hannah. No wonder she reared a son who had such character as Samuel.

Remember Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, who passed on to her son unhypocritical (sincere) faith (II Tim. 1:5).

Think about Susannah Wesley, who raised nineteen children to love and fear God - spending an hour each week with each one individually to love and train them.

The immortal tribute to motherhood is true: "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand

that rules the world" (W.R. Wallace).

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I.ARE YOU <u>TRUSTWORTHY</u>? (v. 11-12)
(Can your husband's heart rest in the fact that you are not deceitful or unfaithful in any way?)

II.ARE YOU A <u>HARD WORKER</u>? (v. 13-19)
(Or have you fallen into the trap of laziness?)

A.SHE <u>FINDS PLEASURE</u> IN HER WORK (V. 13)

B.SHE <u>GOES THE EXTRA MILE</u> IN HER WORK (V. 14)

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E.SHE <u>RECEIVES PHYSICAL STRENGTH AND STAMINA</u> BECAUSE OF HER WORK (V. 17)

F.SHE IS <u>TIRELESS</u> IN HER WORK (V. 18-19)

III.ARE YOU <u>GENEROUS</u>? (v. 20-22)
(Or are you selfish?)

IV.ARE YOU A <u>BLESSING</u> (an asset or plus)? (v. 23-25)
(Or are you a burden or detriment to your husband and children living for Christ?)

V.DO YOUR WORDS <u>EDIFY</u>? (v. 26)
(Or do you tear down and destroy with your tongue?)

VI.IS YOUR FAMILY (household) YOUR <u>PRIORITY</u>? (v. 27-29)
(Or do you live for self-pleasure?)

VII.DO YOU REALLY FEAR GOD? (v. 30)
(Or are you worldly?)

A Check-List
to be a Virtuous Woman
(from Proverbs 31:10-31)

Ladies: You should desire to be a virtuous woman! (verse 10)

Before you become satisfied with the kind of woman you are, take the following character test. Honestly ask yourself the following questions:

1.Are you trustworthy? (v. 11-12)
(Can your husband's heart rest in the fact that you are not deceitful or unfaithful in any way?)

2.Are you a hard worker? (v. 13-19)
(Or have you fallen into the trap of laziness?)

3.Are you generous? (v. 20-22)
(Or are you selfish?)

4.Are you a blessing (an asset or plus)?
(v. 23-25)
(Or are you a burden or detriment to your husband and children living for Christ?)

5.Do your words edify? (v. 26)
(Or do you tear down and destroy with your tongue?)

6.Is your family (household) your priority? (v. 27-29)
(Or do you live for self-pleasure?)

7.Do you really fear God? (v. 30)
(Or are you worldly?)

If by God's grace you have become aware of failure in any of the above virtues:
1. Confess your failure to God right now.
2. Ask Him to give you the needed ability to mature in these specific areas.
3. Determine in your heart to change.
4. Plan specific ways to implement the above virtues into your life.

A Prayer List
So That God Will Make Your Wife
A Virtuous Woman
(from Proverbs 31:10-31)

Husbands: You should desire to have a virtuous wife (verse 10).

Before you are tempted to nag or criticize your wife about what seems to be a character flaw in her life, faithfully pray for God to work in the following ways:

"Dear Father, I pray that you would mature my wife to be:

1.A woman I can fully trust (v. 11-12)
(May she never be unfaithful in any way)

2.A hard worker (v. 13-19)
(May she not fall into the trap of laziness)

3.A generous giver (v. 20-22)
(May she not be selfish, but have a servant's heart)

4.A blessing (an asset or plus) to my living for Christ (v. 23-25)
(May she never be a burden or detriment)

5.A woman who edifies everyone with her tongue (v. 26)
(May she never destroy with her speech)

6.A wife and mother who makes her family (household) her priority (v. 27-29)
(May she not live for self-pleasure)

7.A woman who fears God (v. 30)
(May she never be worldly)

Pray for your wife every day. Be specific in what you ask God to do for your wife, and expect God to answer. When He does, thank Him, and encourage your wife with praise.

A Check-List
For Finding a Virtuous Wife
(from Proverbs 31:10-31)

Single Men: You should desire to find a virtuous woman (verse 10).

Before you even think about marrying her, be sure that she is saved and spiritual, then ask yourself the following questions:

1.Is she worthy of my trust? (v. 11-12)
(Or will she ruin me?)

2.Is she a hard worker? (v. 13-19)
(Or is she lazy?)

3.Is she a generous giver? (v. 20-22)
(Or is she selfish?)

4.Is she a blessing (an asset) to you (to your living for Christ)? (v. 23-25)
(Or is she a burden and detriment to you?)

5.Does she edify with her tongue? (v. 26)
(Or does she destroy with her speech?)

6.Will her family (household) be her priority? (v. 27-29)
(Or does she live for self-pleasure?)

**7.Does she fear God? (v. 30)
(Or is she worldly?)

No woman has all of the above virtues to the measure she should. However, she should have all of them to some degree.
If she is missing any of the above virtues, she has a serious character flaw. **RUN!--before it's too late!**

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I. She is <u>TRUSTWORTHY</u> (v. 11-12)
(Her husband's heart rests in the fact that she is not deceitful or unfaithful in any way)

II. She is A <u>HARD WORKER</u> (v. 13-19)
(She has not fallen into the trap of laziness)

A. SHE <u>FINDS PLEASURE</u> IN HER WORK (V. 13)

B. SHE <u>GOES THE EXTRA MILE</u> IN HER WORK (V. 14)

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III. She is <u>GENEROUS</u> (v. 20-22)
(Not selfish)

IV. She is A <u>BLESSING</u> (an asset or plus) (v. 23-25)
(Not a burden or detriment to her husband and children as she lives for Christ)

V. Her WORDS <u>EDIFY</u> (v. 26)
(She does not tear down and destroy with her tongue)

VI. She Prioritizes her <u>FAMILY</u> (household) (v. 27-29)
(She does not live for self-pleasure)

VII. She REALLY <u>FEARS GOD</u> (v. 30)
(She is not worldly)