

# **The Proverbs 31 Woman**

**Dana Krow**

## The Description of a Worthy Woman

I have thought a lot about how I can bring a Modern Day version to **Proverbs 31:10-31**..." The Worthy Woman" to today's woman. I am not changing the Bible I am just wondering how I can in my life become a worthy woman today.

Dana Krow

**10** An excellent wife, where can she be found?  
She is worth more than the world's largest diamond.

**11** The heart of her husband trusts her. He gains much from her wise counsel.

**12** She encourages and supports his decisions all the days of her life.

**13** She shops diligently for the needs of her family and delights in her bargains.

**14** She plans good and nutritious meals that benefit her family's health and well being.

**15** She rises early to care for her household showing only kindness to those hired for service.

**16** She considers wisely purchases and negotiates to the advantage of all concerned.

**17** She starts her day with prayer and exercise to strengthen her heart, mind and body.

**18** She uses good sense and has a healthy sense of humor and people enjoy her company.

**19** In the evening after tending to her families needs she plans her work for the next day's tasks.

**20** She volunteers her time and talents to charity and helps those in need.

**21** She clothes her family wisely, choosing clothing fitting for each season.

**22** She dresses herself appropriately day or night for each occasion.

**23** Her husband is known by many. He is respected by all he meets as well as his friends, relatives and business associates.

**24** She donates generously and makes herself available to serve in her community and church.

**25** Strength in dignity and patience surround

her, her joy and enthusiasm give hope for the future.

**26** She gives wise counsel to younger women and shows kindness to all people.

**27** She keeps her household in order and is not lazy with idleness.

**28** Her husband and children show love, respect and appreciation for her.

**29** She is not known for self-centeredness but there is no woman more beautiful in her husband's eyes.

**30** Although she has beauty and charm, a wife and mother who “fears the Lord” shall be rewarded.

**31** She will be known by her great faith, loving family, and unselfish works.

### **Additional Information and Discipleship Questions**

**Proverbs 31: [10] Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. (KJV)** An excellent wife, where can she be found? She is worth more than the world’s largest diamond.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:10)** This is a wonderful poem, praising virtuous women. It also serves to instruct men in what to look for in a potential spouse. The woman described here is truly remarkable. While it is often assumed that women played a subservient role in the home and society of ancient Israel, this woman defies such description. Not only is she the manager of the household, she is also a shrewd business woman (and is praised for it). Notice, however, that everything she does is for her family and, by extension, her community. She lives and works for the well-being and livelihood of others. She is not interested in promoting her own self-worth, but her worth is demonstrated by her service, which is ultimately motivated by her love for God. Such a woman should be treasured and honored.

(LSB p. 1046)

In our society where physical appearance counts for so much, it may surprise us to realize that her appearance is never mentioned. Her attractiveness comes from her character. (LAB p. 1131)

1. **Read Proverbs 31:10; 18:22.** No one can find a virtuous and capable wife without God's help. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [11] The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. [12] She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.**

**(KJV)** <sup>11</sup> The heart of her husband trusts her. He gains much from her wise counsel. <sup>12</sup> She encourages and supports his decisions all the days of her life.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:11) “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.”** This first line describes her character as a *wife*. Her fidelity, oneness of heart, and affectionate dutifulness, make the heart of her husband safely trust in her. <sup>(GC)</sup> **“So that he shall have no need of spoil.”** This probably refers

generally to things of value that come to the husband because of what his wife is able to do. <sup>(UBS)</sup> Her careful household management enhances their family's wealth. <sub>(BKC)</sub>

**(Prov. 31:12) “She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.”** Look at Eve – the helpmeet becoming a tempter; Solomon's wives drawing away his heart; Jezebel stirring up her husband to abominable wickedness; Job's wife calling upon her husband to “curse God, and die;” the painful cross of “the brawling woman.” <sup>(GC)</sup> This is in sharp contrast to the good done by the Proverbs 31 woman.

2. **Read Proverbs 31:11.** The husband of the Proverbs 31 woman can trust her completely. True or False

3. **Read Proverbs 31:12.** The Proverbs 31 woman is an asset, not a liability to her husband. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [13] She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. (KJV)** She shops diligently for the needs of her family and delights in her bargains.

**Additional Information:** Verses 13-15 describe the activity of the wife in providing for the needs of the household. Verse 13 is about providing clothing, and verses 14-15 are about providing food. <sup>(UBS)</sup>

**(Prov. 31:13) “She seeketh wool, and flax.”** “**Seeketh**” means that she “finds” or “selects” what she needs. **Wool** and **flax** are the raw materials used for making clothing. **Wool**, the hair of sheep is used to make warm clothes; **flax**, a grass-like plant, gives soft fibers for making cooler clothes (called linen). A translation in a language where wool and flax are not well known says “She makes clothes for the cold season and for the hot season.” <sup>(Ibid.)</sup>

**“And worketh willingly with her hands.”** The word “willingly” means “delight” or “pleasure.” <sup>(Ibid.)</sup>

4. **Read Proverbs 31:13.** The Proverbs 31 woman delights to work with her hands. She is not lazy or slothful. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [14] She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. (KJV)** She plans good and nutritious meals that benefit her family's health and well being.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:14)** The noble wife does shopping. She is like ... merchant ships that brought unusual and fascinating merchandise from other places. <sup>(BKC)</sup>

**“She is like the merchants’ ships.”** This line is a simile in which the wife is compared with ships. The expression **“merchants’ ships”** refers to trading ships; this may be expressed as **“a ship laden with merchandise.”** <sup>(UBS)</sup>

**“She bringeth her food from afar.”** This is the point of comparison between the woman and a ship.

Just as a ship brings cargo from far away, so the housewife brings food or provisions for her household.  
(UBS)

5. **Read Proverbs 31:14.** Excellent women would go far to secure the best food for their families. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [15] She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. (KJV)** She rises early to care for her household showing only kindness to those hired for service.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:15)** Though she has household help she herself gets up early, before daybreak, to help prepare breakfast and food for other meals, and to delegate (portions) to her servants. <sup>(BKC)</sup>

The standard here held before women to aim toward is not that of a religious recluse, but one diligent in every household duty, having the fear of the Lord the basis of all. <sup>(JFB)</sup>

6. **Read Proverbs 31:15.** The reason why the Proverbs 31 woman rises early is: a. to put on some make-up. b. to go buy some new clothes. c. to provide food, that is, to begin preparation of food for her family.

**Proverbs 31: [16] She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. (KJV)** She considers wisely purchases and negotiates to the advantage of all concerned.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:16)** This part of the account portrays the noble wife as a shrewd business woman, making wise investments from her

earnings. There is no foolish purchasing nor indebtedness here. <sup>(NIVBC)</sup>

7. **Read Proverbs 31:16.** The Proverbs 31 woman is able in business and reinvests her earnings. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [17] She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. (KJV)**  
She starts her day with prayer and exercise to strengthen her heart, mind and body.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:17) “She girdeth her loins with strength.”** *She girds her loins* is an idiom for preparing herself for work, which she is going to do with strength. This is a picture of hard work, and probably physical work. NIV expresses this as "She sets about her work vigorously," while TEV says simply "She is a hard worker." An alternative rendering of the

line in one translation is "She is never lazy at any time. She is a strong woman...."

**"And strengtheneth her arms."** This is another picture with a meaning similar to that in the previous line. The focus here is most likely physical vigor; so REB says "and tackles her work with vigour." Since the two lines are very similar in meaning, we may combine them as TEV does: "She is a hard worker, strong and industrious." A simple rendering of the verse from another language is "She is a strong working woman, and she works hard all the time." <sup>(UBS)</sup>

8. **Read Proverbs 31:17.** The Proverbs 31 woman works energetically and with vigor. She has a healthy attitude toward work. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [18] She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. (KJV)** She uses good sense

and has a healthy sense of humor and people enjoy her company.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:18) “She perceiveth that her merchandise is good.”** This housewife recognizes that her work or her business activity is bringing profit; two expressions of this are "She sees that her trading is profitable" (NIV) and "She knows that her affairs are going well" (NJB).

**“Her candle goeth not out by night.”** A lamp is an oil-burning light similar to oil or kerosene lamps used in many parts of the world today. This line is easy to translate literally, and many versions follow the Revised Standard Version. But this statement is really a figurative comment on the work of the housewife; so Today’s English Version says "[she] works late into the night" and the Contemporary English Version "she stays busy until late at night."<sup>(UBS)</sup>

9. **Read Proverbs 31:18.** The Proverbs 31 woman and her wise business dealings are again referred to in this verse. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [19] She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. (KJV)** In the evening after tending to her family's needs she plans her work for the next day's tasks.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:19)** Verses 19-22 focus on the housewife's provision for her own household and for the poor, especially the provision of clothing.

**“She layeth her hands to the spindle.”** The spindle is a device used in spinning. It is a rod or shaped piece of wood, which twists the thread as it is spun, and on which the thread is wound. Although the spindle is strictly used in the spinning process and not in weaving, both TEV and CEV apparently take the double reference

to distaff and spindle to refer to the whole process of making cloth: "She spins her own thread and weaves her own cloth" (TEV), "she spins her own cloth" (CEV).

**“And her hands hold the distaff.”** There is some doubt about the rendering of the last Hebrew word in this line, but most commentators and translators accept the meaning distaff. The distaff is a device used in the process of spinning thread from raw wool or flax. It is a rod or staff with a split end, which holds the wool or flax from which thread is drawn in spinning by hand. She puts her hand to... means that she "holds" (NIV, REB) or works with this device; but in translation it is probably more important to refer to the work that she does. So TEV says that "She spins her own thread."<sup>(UBS)</sup>

10. **Read Proverbs 31:19.** The Proverbs 31 woman uses her tools to turn wool into thread for making clothing. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [20] She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. (KJV)** She volunteers her time and talents to charity and helps those in need.

**Additional Information:** Her activities, driven by the priority of caring for her family, resulted in multiplied fruitfulness for: 1. The poor and needy (Prov. 31:20); 2. her own household (Prov. 31:21). 3. herself (Prov. 31:22); 4. her husband (Prov. 31:23); and 5. the merchants (Prov. 31:24).<sup>(MSB)</sup>

**(Prov. 31:20) “She stretcheth out her hand to the poor.”** “She stretcheth out her hand” is an idiom that means “helps,” “gives,” or “is generous.”<sup>(UBS)</sup> Her industry (Prov. 31:19) is not merely for self, but, “that she may have to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28). The end of her industry is not to hoard, not to waste on unprofitable trifles and self-indulgence, but to spend in relieving the poor all that is above our personal and

family needs. As her industry shines forth in acquiring, so does her piety and charity in giving. How few there are who make this the end of acquiring! <sup>(JFB)</sup>

11. **Read Proverbs 31:20.** The noble wife is selfless and generous. She helps the poor and the needy. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [21] She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. (KJV)**  
She clothes her family wisely, choosing clothing fitting for each season.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:21)** Cold weather does not cause this woman to panic for her household; she is prepared for it. She has clothed them in scarlet, that is, she has provided expensive garments and warm clothing. She spares no cost in protecting her family from the cold. <sup>(BKC)</sup>

12. **Read Proverbs 31:21.** Snow indicates the cold that occurs in the high altitudes of Palestine. Her labors anticipated her family's need for warm clothing in such cold places and seasons. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [22] She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. (KJV)** She dresses herself appropriately day or night for each occasion.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:22) “She maketh herself coverings.”** The term “coverings” is the same term found in Prov. 7:16, where it refers to bedspreads, quilts, bedcovers, or blankets.

**“Her clothing is silk and purple.”** This is a fine (high quality) cloth made from flax, and “purple” an expensive dye or coloring material. This line is a description of clothes that indicate wealth and/ or high rank, evidences of her family's well-to-do position and God's blessings! (UBS)

13. **Read Proverbs 31:22.** The efforts she makes to honor others are rewarded to her. These silk and purple garments are expensive evidences of the blessings returned to her by God's grace. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [23] Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. (KJV)** Her husband is known by many. He is respected by all he meets as well as his friends, relatives and business associates.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:23)** A noble woman enhances her husband's standing among those who transact legal and judicial affairs at the city gate (v. 31) among the elders. Though she is obviously aggressive and competent, she functions in a way that honors her husband's leadership rather than denigrates it. She respects him and builds him up. <sup>(BKC)</sup>

14. **Read Proverbs 31:23.** This woman made a significant contribution to her husband's position in the community and to his success. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [24] She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. (KJV)** She donates generously and makes herself available to serve in her community and church.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:24)** With all her other responsibilities faithfully discharged, she took time to make items of clothing for the purposes of trade.  
(MSB)

15. **Read Proverbs 31:24.** In addition to her household duties, she also makes a profit through the work she does on the side. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [25] Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. (KJV)** Strength in dignity and patience surround her, her joy and enthusiasm give hope for the future.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:25)**

**“Strength and honour are her clothing.”** The term **“strength”** refers to physical strength in verse 17, but here it seems to mean strength of character. **“Honour”** describes a quality of character that people praise or respect. To say that qualities **“are her clothing”** means that she shows those qualities in her life. **“In time to come”** is literally “the day afterwards,” and simply means “the future.” She is not afraid of the future and also looks happily forward to it. <sup>(UBS)</sup>

16. **Read Proverbs 31:25.** **“Strength and honour”** are words that describe the character of the woman who fears the Lord. Her inward clothing displays divine

wisdom, giving her confidence to face the future with its unexpected challenges. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [26] She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. (KJV)** She gives wise counsel to younger women and shows kindness to all people.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:26) “She openeth her mouth with wisdom.”** When she opens her mouth, it is to speak wisely, she speaks with wisdom, and her words are sensible. **“In her tongue is the law of kindness.”** The Hebrew term rendered **“kindness”** is *chesed*. This term may mean “love” or “kindness,” but it may also have the sense of something like “kindly instruction” or “her advice is thoughtful”; on the other hand it may mean “faithful instruction” or “her teaching is sound.” <sup>(UBS)</sup>

17. **Read Proverbs 31:26.** The Proverbs 31 woman is a wise and loving counselor. Kind and faithful instruction comes from her. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [27] She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. (KJV)** She keeps her household in order and is not lazy with idleness.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:27) “She looketh well to the ways of her household.”** She keeps her eye on her household. **“The ways of her household”** refers to the conduct, doings, or affairs of her family. She watches closely what goes on and the needs of the family. In other words, she takes good care of her family. **“Eateth not the bread of idleness”** means to be habitually idle or lazy. She is never lazy and is always busy. <sup>(UBS)</sup>

18. **Read Proverbs 31:27.** The Proverbs 31 woman is a skilled manager of the home. Her supervision of the household is alert, as a watchman. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [28] Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. (KJV)** Her husband and children show love, respect and appreciation for her.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:28)** The wisdom of this noble woman inspires praise from her family – from those who know her the best. Unfortunately, praise often comes from outside the home, from those who do not know the person very well. This woman is of such worth that her children “rise up” to praise her. <sup>(NIVBC)</sup>

19. **Read Proverbs 31:28.** “Hooray, hooray for our mother!” That’s how the children of this woman talk. Her husband also sings her praises. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [29] Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. (KJV)** She is not known for self-centeredness but there is no woman more beautiful in her husband's eyes.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:29)** This verse gives the actual words of praise addressed by the husband to his wife. This woman has done noble things, admirable things, proved her worth and is a good wife. She is the best and number one among all.

20. Read Proverbs 31:29. This woman surpasses all other women. These words are probably the praise of the husband who speaks for the rest of the family. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [30] Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the**

**Lord, she shall be praised. (KJV)** Although she has beauty and charm, a wife and mother who “fears the Lord” shall be rewarded.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:30)** The Song of Solomon shows that charm and beauty can be appreciated. The point here is that they can be deceptive and fleeting. Charm and outward beauty are not abiding attributes. The real worth of a woman is her devotion to God. Proverbs ends where it began with a reference to the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7).<sup>(LBC)</sup>

21. **Read Proverbs 31:30.** A woman can talk sweetly to us, but her behavior may be different. And even if a woman looks very nice, she can't stay that way for ever. True or False

**Proverbs 31: [31] Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in**

**the gates. (KJV)** She will be known by her great faith, loving family, and unselfish works.

**Additional Information: (Prov. 31:31)**

**“Give her of the fruit of her hands.”** Others should give her credit for what her hands have worked for and for what she has done (her deeds and achievements). **“In the gates,”** as in verse 23, refers to the place where members of the town community meet, and so the sense of **“praise her in the gates”** is that everybody hears about her works and praises or honors her. <sup>(UBS)</sup>

22. **Read Proverbs 31:31.** The Proverbs 31 woman should be shown respect and praise in public for what she has done. True or False

**Abbreviations and Acknowledgements**

(LSB) The Lutheran Study Bible

(LAB) The Life Application Bible

- (GC) Geneva Commentary, Prov., Charles Bridges
- (UBS) United Bible Societies Handbook.
- (BKC) Bible Knowledge Commentary
- (JFB) Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary
- (NIVBC) NIV Bible Commentary
- (NIV) New International Bible
- (TEV) Today's English Version
- (NJB) New Jerusalem Bible
- (RSV) Revised Standard Version
- (MSB) The MacArthur Study Bible
- (LBC) Liberty Bible Commentary, Vol., 1

Paraphrase by Dana Krow

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**DKM, 10065 Sun Ridge Circle, Rogers, AR 72756**

