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The Proverbs 31 Woman

“A Description of a Worthy Woman”

Paraphrase by Dana Alton Krow, 2009
Additional Information by Don W. Krow, 2013

I have often thought,
“How can I bring
‘The Worthy Woman’ of Proverbs 31:10-31
into a Modern Day Version
for ‘The Today’s Woman?’”

Dana Krow

1

Additional Information: verse 25

“Strength and honor are her clothing;”

The term **“strength”** refers to physical strength in Proverbs 31:17, but here it seems to mean strength.

“Honor” 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. (UBS)

Verse 13 - 15 describe the activity of the wife providing for the household. Verse 13 is about providing clothing, and verses 14-15 are about providing food. (USC)

13 She seeks wool and flax, And willingly works with her hands. NKJV

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

Additional Information: verse 13

“She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands.”

“Seek” means that she “finds” or “selects” what she needs. Wool and flax are the raw materials used by 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.

THE PROVERBS 31 (21st Century) WOMAN

- 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.

2

A translation in a language where wool and flax are not well known says "She makes clothes for cold season and for the hot season.

"And willingly works with her hands." The word "willingly" means "delight" or "pleasure." (IBID)

14 She is like the merchant ships, She brings her food from afar. NKJV

- 14 She plans good and nutritious meals that benefit her families health and well being.

Additional Information: verse 14

The noble wife does shopping. She is like ... merchant ships that brought unusual and fascinating merchandise from other places. (BKC)

"She is like the merchant 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." (USB)

10

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

31

24 She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies sashes for the merchants.

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

Additional Information: verse 24

With all her other responsibilities faithfully discharged, she took time to make items of clothing for the purposes of trade. (MSB)

25 Strength and honor are her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come. NKJV

- 25 Strength in dignity and patience surround her, her joy and enthusiasm give hope for the future.

23

**31 Give her of the fruit of her hands,
And let her own works praise her in the gates.
NKJV**

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

Additional Information: verse 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. (UBS)

30

**23 Her husband is known in the gates,
When he sits among the elders of the land.
NKJV**

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

Additional Information: verse 23

A noble woman enhances her husband’s standing among those who transact legal and judicial affairs at the city gates (*Proverbs 31:31*) among the elders. Though she is obviously aggressive and competent, she functions in a way that honors her husband’s leadership rather than denigrates. She respects him and builds him up. (BKC)

22

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.

3

“She brings her food from afar.”

This the point of compassion between the woman and a ship. Just as a ship brings cargo from afar away, so the housewife brings food or provisions for her household. (USB)

**15 She also rises while it is yet night,
And provides food for her household,
And a portion for her maidservants.**

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

Additional Information: verse 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. The standard here held before woman 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. (JFB)

11

- 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.

**16 She considers a field and buys it;
From her profits she plants a vineyard. NKJV**

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

Additional Information: verse 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. (NIVBC)

**17 She girds herself with strength,
And strengthens her arms.**

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

**30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing,
But a woman who fears the Lord,
She shall be praised.**

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

Additional Information: Verse 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 in Proverbs 1:7. (LBC)

**22 She makes herself coverings;
Her clothing is silk and purple. KJV**

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

Additional Information:

“She makes herself coverings;”

The term “covering” is the same term found in Proverbs 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 linen is a description of the clothes that indicate wealth and/or high rank, evidences of her family’s well-to-do position and God’s blessings! (UBS)

29 **“Many daughters have done well,
But you excel them all.” NKJV**

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

Additional Information: verse 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.

- 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.

21 **She is not afraid of snow for her household,
For all her household is clothed with scarlet.
NKJV**

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

Additional Information: verse 21

Cold weather does not cause this woman to panic for her household; she is prepared for it. She has clothed provided them in scarlet, that is, she has provided them expensive garments and warm clothing. She spares no cost in protecting her family from the cold. (BKC)

Additional Information: verse 17

“She girds herself with strength,”

“She girds herself” 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. The 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 strengthens 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 vigor.” 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

10 Who can find a virtuous wife?

For her worth is far above rubies. NKJV

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

Additional Information: verse 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*). Such a woman should be treasured and honored.

In our society where physical appearance counts

rendering of the verse from another translation is "She is a strong working woman, and she works hard all of the time." (UBS)

**18 She perceives that her merchandise is good,
And her lamp does not go out by night. NKJV**

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

Additional Information: verse 18

"She perceives 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)

**28 Her children rise up and call her blessed;
Her husband also, and he praises her: NKJV**

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

Additional Information: verse 28

The wisdom of the 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. (NIVBC)

"Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy."

Her industry (*Proverbs 31:19*) is not merely for self, but, "that she may have something to give to him who has need" (*Ephesians 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! (JFB)

**27 She watches over the ways of her household,
And does not eat the bread of idleness. NKJV**

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

Additional Information: verse 27

“She watches over the ways of her household,”

She keeps her eyes 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. **“And does not eat the bread of idleness”** means to be habitually idle or lazy. She is never lazy and is always busy. (UBS)

20 She extends her hand to the poor, Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy. NKJV

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

Her activities, driven by the priority of caring for her family, resulted in multiplied fruitfulness for:

1. The poor and needy (Proverbs 31:20)
2. Her own household (Proverbs 31:21)
3. Herself (Proverbs 31:22)
4. Her husband (Proverbs 31:23)
5. The merchants (Proverbs 31:24) (MSB)

Additional Information: verse 20

“She stretches out her hand to the poor.”

“She stretches out her hand” is an idiom that means “helps”, “gives,” or “is generous.” (UBS)

for so much, it may surprise us to realize that her appearance is never mentioned. Her attractiveness comes from her character. (LSB)

**11 The heart of her husband safely trusts her.
So he will have no lack of gain. NKJV**

12 She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

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

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

Additional Information: verse 11

“The heart of her husband safely trusts her.”

This line describes her character as a wife. Her fidelity, oneness of heart, and affectionate dutifulness, makes the heart of her husband safely trust her. (GC)

“And her lamp does not go 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.” (UBS)

Verses 19-22 focus on the housewife’s provision for her own household and for the poor, especially the provision of clothing.

“So he will have no lack of gain.”

This probably refers generally to things of value that come to the husband because of what his wife is able to do. (UBS) Her careful household management enhances their family’s wealth. (BKC)

Additional Information: verse 12

“She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.”

Look at Eve — the help-meet 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.” (GC) This is a sharp contrast to the good done by the Proverbs 31 woman.

8

**19 She stretches out her hands to the spindle,
And her hand holds the distaff.**

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

Additional Information: verse 19

“She stretches out her hands to the spindle,”

The spindle is a device use in spinning. It is a 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 the 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)

16

**26 She opens her mouth with wisdom,
And on her tongue is the law of kindness. NKJV**

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

Additional Information: verse 26

“She opens 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.” (UBS)

25

“And her hand holds the distaff.”

There is some doubt the rendering of the last Hebrew word in this line, but most commentators and translators accept the meaning distaff. The distaff is a device use in the process of spinning thread from raw wool or flax. It is a rod of 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... meaning 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.” (UBS)

17