

Our Bible Sisters:

The Proverbs 31 Woman – Setting God-Pleasing Goals for Your Life

Leader's Guide

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*Our Bible Sisters is a series of one-hour studies that may be used
separately or in any combination. Each looks at a different woman of the
Bible, highlighting God's faithfulness in her life, with applications to the lives
of all Christian women today.*

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Opening Prayer

“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.” – 1 Peter 3:3-4.

Our study today will define this in more detail.

1. Read Proverbs 1:2-4. What is the purpose of the book of Proverbs?

It is a collection of wisdom that sets forth truths of God’s will for our lives, often using familiar and easily understood pictures for contrast and comparison. These Proverbs tell us how to apply God’s wisdom to specific situations and decisions in our lives. Notice the words “attaining wisdom,” “acquiring a disciple and prudent life,” and “giving prudence... knowledge... discretion.” With this in mind, the wife of noble character in Proverbs 31 is God’s ideal woman. Her life isn’t a yard stick by which we are to be measured but a goal, defined by God, toward which women should be moving; a goal which we can never fully attain.

2. Read Proverbs 31:1 and 10-31. This portion of Proverbs is attributed to King Lemuel. We do not know for certain who King Lemuel is; however, ancient rabbis considered this to be a pen name taken by Solomon. The description of the ideal woman is a message directed to King Lemuel by his mother, describing what he should look for in a woman he wishes to take as a wife. A woman fitting this description is indeed rare and someone to be greatly treasured. She is a true gift from God.
3. Let’s discover some of the things about the character of the Proverbs woman. What do we learn about the source of her strength from vs 25? What impact does this have on her?

She has strength - she’s bold and forceful, strong and confident – and this is balanced with dignity. Strength and confidence rooted in self make one proud and aren’t usually expressed with dignity. Strength that comes from a solid understanding of God and whom he has made us to be will be tempered by humility. This is what allows her to smile or laugh at the future. Because her strength comes from God, she is free of anxiety and worry. She may not be immune to these emotions, but they do not control her. (Philippians 4:6-7)

4. What do we learn about the way she speaks from vs 26?

She speaks with wisdom, i.e. practical knowledge, but her speech is flavored with kindness. Wisdom without kindness can hurt more than help; it can become an “I told you so” sting. Her approach makes the comments palatable and even welcome.

5. Now let's discover something about the labors of the Proverbs woman. She is both a homemaker and a business woman. The two do not have to be at odds with each other as long as both are surrendered to God. Work is a blessing from God, whether parenting, working in the business world, homemaking or providing a service. What do we learn about:

Her attitude toward work from vs 13?

She works and she does it with eager hands – the picture of someone who faces her tasks with enjoyment and vigor. This work could be for her family as well as for her business since we are told in vs 24 that she makes garments and sells them. What God gives her to do sustains and satisfies her.

The quality of what she does from vs 14?

The picture is of a merchant, loading his ship with the bounty from his country and then sailing from port to port to trade for what he doesn't have at home. This woman is industrious and goes out of her way to get the best she can for her family and her business.

Her preparedness from vs 15, 19, 21?

She rises early so she is ready to meet the needs of the day. This goes beyond preparing meals for the household. It includes her daily chores (sewing in vs 19) as well as preparations for the months ahead (vs 21).

Being an economic asset to her family in vs 16 and 24?

In this 2-income family, she evaluates the opportunities – weighs the cost against the benefits – and then wisely invests the earnings from her business. She makes clothes and sells them. It isn't that she sells but rather that she is innovative and has found a way to use her gifts to meet a need and turn a profit. She could be selling a product such as baked goods or furniture, or providing a service such as health care. This is not to devalue those women who do not have earnings of their own. The thought would be the same if she makes a profit through her business or if she saves money by wisely managing the family budget. Certainly the season of life and individual circumstances have a significant effect on the opportunities that may be available.

How she cares for herself from vs 17 and 22?

She takes care of herself so that she is able to do her tasks well. She makes nice things to decorate her home and she dresses herself with the best she can. In other words, she doesn't sacrifice herself but knows that she has value and is concerned with her appearance and happiness, and that of her family.

6. All women have relationships to manage and our Proverbs woman is no different. God made us to be social and has given us the ability to communicate. Because of her relationship with God, she is able to manage all of the relationships in her life. What do we learn about her:

Relationship with her husband from vs 11-12, 23?

She is absolutely trustworthy and faithful – the very foundation of what is needed for a successful marriage. Trust is built by being transparent, communicating, keeping your word, building up your mate.

Building this type of relationship is not done quickly but is the result of consistent behavior “all the days of her life.” Because of their relationship and her support, her husband gains respect. Isn’t that a powerful thought!

Heart for serving from vs 20?

She is compassionate and reaches out to those in need. The “reaching” shows an intentional ministry, going out of her way. She looks for needs and then meets them.

Relationship with God from vs 30?

Charm and beauty are things which many of the women of our world value. Yet they are not the building blocks of meaningful relationships. Only our relationship with God gives us the security to be real and vulnerable in our earthly relationships. It is walking in God’s grace that makes us agents of grace to others. It is God’s forgiveness that allows us to ask for and grant forgiveness in our earthly relationships.

7. From vs 28-31, how could anyone begin to live this type of life? What are the rewards that result?

She is openly praised by her family and community alike. This isn’t hollow flattery, or based on a popularity contest. She deserves the praise because of what she has done for her family, her business, her community and her Lord. A solid understanding and deep-seated belief of what God has done for her allows her to always put God and his will foremost in her life. She has an attitude of humble service without self gratification. She works as if it is only God’s opinion that matters. Worldly beauty is vain and fleeting; worldly flattery is frequently hollow. The inner beauty that comes from fearing God is not fleeting but lasts a lifetime and beyond.

8. If we look at the Proverbs 31 woman and say there’s no way any woman could ever be like this, we’re defeating ourselves. If we look at her as what God wants women to develop into, then we can find the grace to begin the journey. The first step in change is not gritting our teeth and trying harder to be perfect. It’s not about commitment. It’s about surrendering to Christ. Surrendering is admitting that we cannot do this with our own strength; we must have God’s help. How can each of these passages help us lean on Christ instead of going it alone?

- Galatians 2:20

My entire life is what it is because of the love God has shown me.

- Isaiah 64:6-8

On our own we are only clay; God is the potter who makes us into something useful and valuable.

- Ephesians 1:3

He has given us every spiritual blessing – from eternity, before time began, God planned to make us part of his family. We are his dear children. Everything he has is, even now, being used for our good and our blessing.

- Philippians 4:13

Absolutely every God-pleasing thing is possible with God, who is the source of all of our strength.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:24

God has defined the woman I am to be and he can make me into that woman!

- 2 Peter 1:3

God has given me everything I need to live the life he wants me to live – there are now no excuses.

You might want to write down one of these passages, or another one, that you feel will help you remember this fundamental truth – that the Proverbs 31 woman is what God wants us to become and we can do this with his help. Post it where you will see it regularly and include it in your prayers.

9. Read Proverbs 31:10-31 again. Looking back over your life, short or long, how can you see God at work in one of these areas? In which would you like to especially grow in the year ahead?
- Development of your character?

 - Your labor or work?

 - Your relationships?

 - Your spiritual life?

For further personal study:

Keeping a journal may be a useful tool. In your personal time over the next days, ask God to lead you as you look at yourself honestly. Use these questions and search the Scriptures to find additional verses to help you grow:

- What do I need to change in my priorities or my attitude?
- Where do I need to ask for forgiveness?
- What should I begin doing or quit doing?
- What changes do I need to make to my worship, devotion and prayer life to be a woman who truly fears the Lord?

Closing Prayer/Meditation

Brothers, Sisters, Let Us Gladly CW 484 vs. 1

*Brothers, sisters, let us gladly
Give to God our all, our best—
Service hearty, thorough, honest,
With a living love impressed.
All our duty, all our striving,
All our time to him belong;
Praise him, then, with true devotion;
Come before him with a song.*

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