

What a Woman!

Mothers Day

May 11, 2014

Proverbs 31:10-31

10 A good wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. 11 The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. 12 She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. 13 She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. 14 She is like the ships of the merchant, she brings her food from afar. 15 She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and tasks for her maidens. 16 She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. 17 She girds her loins with strength and makes her arms strong. 18 She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. 19 She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. 20 She opens her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hands to the needy. 21 She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet. 22 She makes herself coverings; her clothing is fine linen and purple. 23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. 24 She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers girdles to the merchant. 25 Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. 26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. 27 She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. 28 Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 29 "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all." 30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. 31 Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

Whew! What a Woman! I do not know about you but reading all of those things that this paragon of womanhood is capable of doing is exhausting. I enjoy and love Proverbs as it is one of the most fun books in our scriptures. Almost the fortune cookies of the Bible. Each little piece is some tidbit of wisdom. Throughout Proverbs are many pieces of advice in regards to women. As in Proverbs 21:19 "Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife." Or 18:22 "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord" or this fun one found in Proverbs 12:4 "A good wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones." Proverbs remember is written for men, by men. It is part of the wisdom literature of the scriptures. Women's value is around this time only for what she can bring to a marriage through her dowry or her looks. Women were regarded as property, almost the highest form of servitude was to be a wife.

However as we have heard in Proverbs 31 there was some regard for women. This last chapter in Proverbs is often under the title "Ode to a Capable Wife" or "Epilogue: The Wife of Noble Character". It provides an interesting view of what the life of a woman would be like and an interesting dynamic for relationships that we still utilize today.

Women have undergone a lot of change and transition societally since Biblical Times, they have been however continually as a person less than man. This dynamic of understanding has been changing and it began to significantly change after WWII in our society in particular. In 1947 just after WWII the first DC Comic publication with Superwoman came out. Almost as an alter ego of Lois Lane who becomes this force to be reckoned with over the course of the comic edition but it does eventually fade away. Over the years since then there have been many versions of Superwoman in comics, in movies, and the empowerment and equalizing of women in general throughout our country and a continual evolution around the world.

However, as we delve into our scripture lesson today we still have visions of this "Superwoman" the one who not only cooks, cleans, takes care of the house, but does all the others tasks as well to do with the family life. Add in a job and children and you have the modern day equivalent of a Proverbs 31 woman. What a woman that would be!

We though as women still often try to accomplish this Proverbs 31 ideal in a variety of ways. Women today struggle to be everything to everyone. We work a 40+ hour a week job to help our families income, we pick children up from day care, bring them home, we bake cookies or cupcakes into the wee hours of the morning for the next day's bake sale, we

help with school projects, and wipe tears, tuck in, and chase away the monsters under the beds. Then we may or may not fall into bed after doing two loads of laundry, folding, and putting away, then letting the dog out and in and picking up toys. And to be fair most of our life partners are right there with us but today is not necessarily about them.

Today as we celebrate the women who give birth to us, the women who are our mother's, our grandmothers, our aunts, our sisters, the mothers of our hearts, those who are still young enough to choose who they want to be. We lift up women in general and honor them for being the wonderful people that they are in our lives.

Here this scripture again in the Message interpretation

A good woman is hard to find,

and worth far more than diamonds.

Her husband trusts her without reserve,

and never has reason to regret it.

Never spiteful, she treats him generously

all her life long.

She shops around for the best yarns and cottons,

and enjoys knitting and sewing.

She's like a trading ship that sails to faraway places

and brings back exotic surprises.

She's up before dawn, preparing breakfast

for her family and organizing her day.

She looks over a field and buys it,

then, with money she's put aside, plants a garden.

First thing in the morning, she dresses for work,

rolls up her sleeves, eager to get started.

She senses the worth of her work,

is in no hurry to call it quits for the day.

She's skilled in the crafts of home and hearth,

diligent in homemaking.

She's quick to assist anyone in need,

reaches out to help the poor.

She doesn't worry about her family when it snows;

their winter clothes are all mended and ready to wear.

She makes her own clothing,

and dresses in colorful linens and silks.

Her husband is greatly respected

when he deliberates with the city fathers.

She designs gowns and sells them,

brings the sweaters she knits to the dress shops.

Her clothes are well-made and elegant,

and she always faces tomorrow with a smile.

When she speaks she has something worthwhile to say,

and she always says it kindly.

She keeps an eye on everyone in her household,

and keeps them all busy and productive.

Her children respect and bless her;

her husband joins in with words of praise:

“Many women have done wonderful things,

but you’ve outclassed them all!”

Charm can mislead and beauty soon fades.

The woman to be admired and praised

is the woman who lives in the Fear-of-God.

Give her everything she deserves!

Festoon her life with praises!

There are some subtle differences, we are worth more than diamonds over rubies now and instead of noble things we do wonderful things. Language, syntax, and context have decidedly changed over time. But the second to last line is the most important in whatever interpretation you may or may not read. “Charm is deceptive, beauty is fleeting but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”

That my friends is what being a woman, a man, a child, an adult, a person in this life is all about. Living our lives in light of God. You see everything in that list to be done, everything we may or may not add to it has little value or meaning if we do not do it for the Lord. The daily tasks, the grind, the moments of madness in being a mother, a wife, a daughter, a friend, a lover, a sister, an aunt, a helpmate, all the wonderful things we can be as women mean nothing without it all showing our love for God.

That is what sets us apart and makes us of noble character, or capable, or amazing, or wonderful. That we live for the Lord.

As such we are preparing to send one of our own out and forth in service to the Lord. I ask that she come forward now that we can pray for her and with her and that we can pray for all women in their service to our God.