

The Proverbs 31 Woman

**LIFEFAITHFUSION
DEVOTIONAL
DAY THREE**

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Proverbs 31:10-31
Romans 8:1-4
Matthew 11:30
Matthew 5:48
Psalm 25
John 5:36
John 19:30
Exodus 20:11
Psalm 131

DIGGING DEEPER

The family who is “clothed in scarlet” (v.21) is really a metaphor. Scarlet was worn by the Old Testament priests, but the present day application is clear: this woman had no anxiety about the future, because she had led her entire household to faith in Christ.

PRAYER FOCUS

DEAR GOD,
Help me to learn how to find
Your best plans for my life.
Don't let me live by legalism
but by grace and faith.
Amen



PERFECTIONISM AND PRIORITIES

Proverbs 31, an Old Testament passage, must be interpreted in the light of New Testament truth. If the list of virtues are used as a measuring stick to determine our worth, then we are falling into the trap of legalism. We will always be frustrated when we aspire to be the Proverbs 31 woman. When we look at this passage in light of God's grace, we see that these are qualities that will be a natural outgrowth of walking in intimacy with Jesus Christ. *Perfectionism* leads to death. Our *priority* is to follow Christ. Then He manifests all of the beautiful qualities of His nature in us. Paul writes in Romans 8:1-4 that the law brings death, but the law of the Spirit brings life and peace:

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.” (NIV)

We do not live our lives by a checklist. We live our lives walking in intimate relationship with Christ and following His leadership day by day. Jesus said His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). The Greek word for “yoke” actually means “well-fitted.” The yoke we wear is perfectly tailored to our unique abilities and personalities.

Another passage that often brings discouragement to the Christ-follower is “Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48 KJV). Who can measure up to perfection? Once again, the Greek word sheds light on this passage. We are to be *teleos*-to do what God designed for us to do. A pencil eraser is *teleos* when it erases. We are *teleos* when we follow God’s plan for our lives. His plan is doable and “well-suited” to who we are.

- Have you ever struggled with perfectionism? In what areas? When you read the list of qualities of the Proverbs 31, how does it make you feel? Hopeful? Excited? Frustrated? Discouraged?
- What are some of the plans that God has for your life? If you do not know, ask those closest to you what they see as your strengths and abilities. What do you find the most fulfillment doing? Perhaps those things that give you the greatest joy are your “well-fitted” yoke? Pray through Psalm 25 and ask God to show you His purposes for your life.
- Is it hard for you to freely accept God’s love and forgiveness? Spend some time meditating on the promise in Romans 8: 1-4 that Jesus has grace (empowerment, strength) for you today to be the person He designed for you to be.

FRANTIC OR FULFILLED?

The woman described in Proverbs 31 is often considered to be the original “superwoman.” Many women feel they would need track shoes and a personal trainer to follow in her footsteps. In the Jewish culture around 950 BC, the Hebrew wife would have had specific duties that included obeying her husband, milling the grain, cooking, washing, nursing the infants, weaving cloth and making the family’s clothes. Malls, microwaves, and TV dinners were non-existent. The husband also had responsibilities in the marriage: to provide food, clothing, lodging, conjugal duties, to buy back his wife if she was captured, to obtain medicine if she became sick, and if she kicked the bucket, he was required to hire 2 flute players and a wailer for her funeral!

Lemuel’s mother taught that in addition to the basic duties she assumed in her culture, this godly woman was a devoted servant of God, was generous to the poor, was trusted by her husband, was thrifty, diligent, loyal, wise, multi-talented, and humble. Actually, this description is a **compilation** of character qualities and gifts that King Lemuel’s mother desired in a wife for her son. No woman could embody all of these traits.

Many women attempt to be “super” employee/employer, mom, wife, chauffer, purchasing agent, laundress, gourmet chef, and hostess. Many men also strive to be “super heroes.” The result of such unrealistic expectations is exhaustion, disappointment and frustration. Sometimes these self-imposed standards can cause depression and self-loathing.

God the Creator worked for six days and rested on the seventh! The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:11 specify that man is to work six days and take one day to rest. God knows we need time for physical restoration and spiritual reflection. When Jesus was speaking to His disciples in John 5:36, He said that He had finished the work the Father had given Him to do. On the cross, He cried “It is finished!” (John 19:30) Did Jesus heal every sick person? Did He overturn Roman oppression? Jesus said that His job was simply to do the Father’s will.

- Is your life frantic or fulfilled? Do you speed through the devotionals, or do you spend time reading and looking up the scriptures, applying them to your life?

- Do you have a Sabbath? Have you carved out time for yourself to be refreshed? If not, dialogue with your husband or extended family, and see if you can make plans to rest and recuperate. Psalm 131 talks about “quieting our souls” before God. Can you begin to make this a priority in your life?
- If you have not purchased a journal, buy a journal or notebook this week and record three things: observations about how God is working in your life, prayer requests, and notes that you have taken as you read scripture or listen to sermons.

LOVE IN ACTION

If someone were to write an article about you, what would they say? Remember, no one person could embody all of these traits, but here is a creative present-day description of the woman in Proverbs 31:

“Do you remember the gifted lady I mentioned? I met her and she’s really gracious! (v.26) Before I’d only seen her walking down the street with her family, and they were wearing such beautiful scarlet linen clothes (v. 21). A friend of mine works in the thrift store and said this woman regularly contributes food, clothes, and furniture for the needy (vs. 19-20 LB). When someone is sick or in crisis, she is the first one to respond. Whenever possible, her children accompany her to help the sick and hurting. She believes it’s important for them to grow up helping others. (v. 20)

“My neighbor had land to sell. This same lady, after careful research of the real estate market, bought the land and negotiated a fair price for the purchase. She was intelligent, kind, and honest in her business dealings (v. 16). She personally contracted with merchants to buy food and dry goods, and to sell garments and sashes that she had made (v.24 NIV). Since I’d never met her, I assumed most of what I’d heard was exaggerated gossip. I was wrong.

“As you know, I’m a reporter and I was given the assignment to write a story about King Lemuel’s wife. She was kind enough to invite me into her home. When we met, I shook her hand. I was surprised! I expected her hands to be soft and smooth, but they were calloused from hard work. She made all the family clothes and upholstery (v.22 LB). I saw her distaff and spindle (v. 19 NIV). Since I don’t sew, she explained to me that the spindle was used to guide the thread as it was fashioned into cloth. She made her clothes out of linen. (Of course, everyday clothing is made from sheep and goat skins).

“As we walked around her home, she took me up on the roof and showed me the flax-stalks that were drying (Joshua 2:6) so she could make thread. She would weave the thread to make linen cloth (v. 21). She showed me the warm clothes she provided for her family when the weather gets cold. Since we typically have a warm climate, it doesn’t snow very often (v. 21 NASB). However, this enterprising lady likes to be prepared. This wonderful wife and mother is involved with everything that happens with her family. She knows the state of her business endeavors, the schedules of her husband and children, and the amount of money budgeted for her household. She is practical and thorough.”

- What qualities do you most admire about the Proverbs 31 woman? Who do you admire as a godly wife and mother? Why? How does she relate to her husband and family? How does she express her faith?
- How do we choose the right priorities each day? Each day can be a choice between that which is good and that which is best. What are your highest priorities?

APPLYING THE SCRIPTURES

Read the following and write your observations on the back of this sheet:

Proverbs 31:10-31; Romans 8:1-4; Matthew 11:30; Matthew 5:48; Psalm 25;
John 5:36; John 19:30; Exodus 20:11; Psalm 131.