

The Perfect Woman (uh oh)

Proverbs 31:10-31

This one's for the ladies. Guys, for those of you with mixed groups, feel free to jump right into the conversation...just be careful lol.

There are a couple of things we need to know before we launch into this quick look at Proverbs 31:10-31...

First, let's be perfectly clear right from the start...there are no perfect women. Should anyone labor under the notion that you must absolutely fit some image of perfection you will lose every time.

Second, Biblical Proverbs are a unique category of biblical literature. They provide "proverbial truth." Dr. Thomas L. Constable (<https://www.planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/html/ot/proverbs/proverbs.htm>) says this about proverbs: "A proverb is usually a succinct statement that stands in place of a long explanation and expresses a truth about reality."

Proverbs contain wisdom. On the one hand they contain truth meant to be applied immediately. On the other hand they are not meant to be appropriated as promises. For example, while it is proverbially true that should you "Train a child in the way he should go" so that "when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverb 22:6), it is not a promise that good parenting will always produce the desired results. Nonetheless, anything short of "Train a child in the way he should go" would be absolute folly. All things being equal, proverbial truth is always your best option. Therefore the pursuit of the ideals contained in the Proverbs is a fast-track to an advanced degree in Applied Theocentric Wisdom (that's just a fancy way of saying doing things God's way).

Bringing these two items together, we are faced with a caution that leads to encouragement. Here's the caution: do not read this passage of scripture and go away thinking, "Nuts, I am anything but The Perfect Woman and never will be." Instead, remember we are reading about the "ideal woman." The ideal is not who we are, but who we can aim to become. This is no different than an athlete looking for greater performance, a businesswoman seeking to increase her net profits, a teacher attempting to find better ways to convey ideas, or a follower of the Savior wanting to become more and more like him. Wow, imagine that. Yet that is precisely what Christians should be...more and more like Jesus.

The Apostle of God, inspired by the Spirit of God, added this to the Word of God: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." So that's the encouragement—aiming to be more and more like the Proverbs 31 woman moves you closer and closer to being like Jesus.



Questions

So where do we get our ideas regarding the perfect woman? Hollywood? Miss America? The television Mom of the 1950's and 60's?

While each of these may have something to contribute, what problem do we face should we choose to labor under these images of the ideal woman?

Observation (NIV)

1. Read Proverb 31:30

A woman who "fears the Lord" is a godly woman

2. Read Proverbs 31:10 and 25

A woman of "noble character" possessing "strength and dignity" is a woman of honor and integrity.

3. Read Proverbs 31:11 and 12

A woman who deserves "full confidence" is a woman who can be fully trusted.

4. Read Proverb 31:13, 15, 18, 21, 25 and 27

A woman who works with "eager hands," who rises early, who stops late, who prepares for the future, and who does not waste time is a self-disciplined woman.

5. Read Proverb 31:26 and verses 16 and 18

A woman who speaks with "wisdom and faithful instruction" and applies this to her life is a woman steeped in a biblical worldview.

6. Read Proverb 31:20

A woman who "opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy" is a woman who is very kind and generous.



Application

Now that we have seen six eternal principles to be found in the ideal woman, let's return for a few moments to the caution and encouragement on page one...

1. What does it feel like when we fail to remember the caution and encouragement and instead begin to see ourselves as failures since we do not always attain to the six principles?

If we persist in living this way, what can we expect?

2. On the other hand, what is the problem with moving to the other extreme, i.e. "Well, since I know I cannot achieve perfection, and I know God still loves and accepts me, I'll just go on being the same old me?"

If we persist in living this way, what can we expect?

How do you suppose God sees this "solution?"

3. There is a third way. It can be summed up with the following declaration, "I know God loves and accepts me just the way I am, but I also know God has great adventures awaiting me as he transforms me more and more into the image of his Son" (Romans 8:28-39 esp. vs. 29).

If someone would commit to praying for you everyday regarding one or more of the six principles, which would you choose?

Regarding those you would choose, what emotional or social roadblocks are you facing that might be slowing your progress?

OK, let's get real with it...would you like a little accountability? If so, who do you think you could ask to become not only your prayer partner regarding your choice, but also someone who will talk with you about your choice?

Finally, since changes like these can only come via full dependence on God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, how well do you understand that process? What resources do you have available to help you understand it better? How will you determine the validity and reliability of your resources? Is there someone with whom you can talk to about all of this? What will your action plan look like?

