

THE WORTHY WOMAN

by Dennis Gullede

We hear of many types of women these days. There are beautiful women, career women, sophisticated women, and liberated women, but you hardly ever hear of a godly woman or "worthy woman" (1 Tim. 2:10). That is because the world is not interested in such.

The description of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 is the apex of womanhood. It is "designed to show what wives the women should make and what wives the men should choose" (Matthew Henry). We have the abridgement of this in 1 Timothy 2:9-10 and 1 Peter 3:16. The manner in which the question is put in verse ten suggests that a truly "worthy woman" is difficult to find. But she can be found where women of the Word are found. Indeed, the world needs the stability and strength of godly women. They are needed in the home. Mothers who work at home are the unsung heroines of society; a few see and appreciate what they do. They are needed in the community (Matt. 5:13-16).

Herein is a picture of womanhood that is by no means unbelievable, but rather attainable to all who aspire to it. We have before us the character of a woman of genuine worth; first, in general (verses 10-12), secondly, in its component parts (verses 13-29), and thirdly, in summary (verses 30-31).

The Worthy Woman In General (Verses 10-12)

1. She is worthy ("virtuous," KJV). The word "worthy" literally means, "a woman of strength," or power both of body and mind. She may be the weaker vessel physically, but she is often superior morally and spiritually. The word describes those who are "able" (Ex. 18:21). It describes character (Cf., Ruth 3:11). It should be remembered that in Proverbs Solomon gave many warnings regarding "strange women," that is, the fornicating, lewd lustful and adulterous type.

2. She is trustworthy (verse 11). Her husband has no cause to fear anything which he entrusts to her, whether it be his name, home, livelihood or children. Married couples must be able to trust each other. No marriage can survive in jealousy and mistrust. It is a mistake to marry someone you cannot trust.

3. She is good (verse 12). She is a good helpmeet (Gen. 2:18). She has her husband's good always in view. Her good is unmixed---she will do him good and not evil. Her good is constant and permanent, that is, "until death do us part."

The Worthy Woman In Particular (Verses 13-29)

1. She is a willing worker (verses 13-15). In the home she is noted for her industry and labor (Tit. 2:5). She is no sluggard (Prov. 6:6). "Man works from morn to set of sun, but a

woman's work is never done. She is chef, clothes designer and maker, interior decorator, gardener, educational director, budget keeper---sweetheart and mother. She holds more positions than the entire presidential cabinet" (Foy E. Wallace, Jr.). Note in these verses that she, (A) Is a good keeper of her home, (B) Cares for her family, and (C) Sees that they are well fed and tended to.

2. She is business like (verse 16). She provides for the growing needs of her family. The word "consider" suggests that she is wise and prudent and does not make financial decisions without careful forethought. The management of a home is no small time business. Home is where character is built, happiness is created and enlarged and souls are prepared for eternity (Eph. 6:1-4; 1 Pet. 3:1-3; Eph. 5:22-33).

3. She is strong (verse 17). The worthy woman has a strong physical body. She takes good care of herself because health care is not a trivial thing to the Christian (I Cor. 6:19-20). You will not find her out all hours of the night drinking, and smoking and destroying herself. The very acts of bearing and rearing children requires a physical stamina that most men know nothing of.

4. She is appreciative (verse 18a). That is in regard to things that are good (Rom. 12:9; 1 Thess. 5:21). She perceives the value of her work even when no one else does. She has a sense of value regarding good things for her family.

5. She is watchful (verse 18b). This suggests the idea of preparedness. It is a fact that a good mother is in tune to the needs of her children whatever the hour of day or night.

6. She is skillful (verse 19). The "distaff" (ASV) was used to hold wool while spinning. The use of it denotes skill. We might say, "She put her hand to the work." She is an example of her work and does not consider it an insult to her liberty nor disparagement to her dignity.

7. She is charitable (verse 20). It is not her wish to enrich herself by withholding (Prov. 21:26; 1 Jno. 3:17). She sees those in need and reaches out to help.

8. She is confident (verse 21). Her confidence is the result of her preparation. She is prepared for all eventualities. She does not let the summer go by in idleness, but prepares for the time of greatest need (Prov. 6:6-11).

9. She is attractive (verse 22). After providing for others, she also provides for herself. She appreciates comfort and beauty. Even if she appreciates the finer things, she is not so vain as to imagine that her primary adorning is outward (Cf. 1 Pet. 3:3-6).

10. She is good for her husband (verse 23). A man is known somewhat by the companion of his life. By his association with her he improves himself. By his careful attitude and pleasant humor it appears that he has an agreeable wife at home. For those who do not, have their tempers soured because of problems at home.

11. She is acquainted with real value (verses 24-25). She manages her affairs in this life, but knows what is most important. She "shall rejoice in time to come." That is, she has a good disposition: as sense of humor, not scorn; optimism, not pessimism; cheer, not gloom.

12. She is wise (verses 26-29). The counsel she offers is that of wisdom and common sense. She is an adviser, but not a gossip. She is a conversationalist, but not a slanderer. Kindness is the law of her tongue. She is not given to harsh words, sarcastic jibes or nagging (Prov. 27:15). Her husband and children praise her. It is a laudable instance of marital love for husbands to give praise to their wives.