

Lesson 7 14 December, 2014

Virtuous Womanhood

Lesson Scope: Proverbs 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 31

Lesson Focus

The value of virtue is greatly underestimated in our day, and virtuous women represent a diminishing minority. Our concept of true virtue must be strengthened and taught to our daughters. How easily we could bring up a generation of daughters who display traits of character that are less than virtuous!

Many pagan societies have devalued the social status of women to near slavery and would treat them as property. The Scriptures make it clear; however, that God's plan places women in a high and honorable position as "an help meet" for man.

Today, women are taught to pursue careers instead of motherhood, self-advancement instead of homemaking, and self-assertion at the cost of healthy homelife. Society is reaping the fruits of dysfunctional homes that have resulted from ignoring the worth of virtuous women in the home.

In a day when much discussion is wasted in attempting to discover the role of the modern woman, it is again important to see what God has to say on the subject. God created the woman to be a help suitable for man. Since men too often have failed in their leadership roles, women have increasingly tried to usurp male authority over them in the name of equality. When we see the fruit of these trends of society, we should take warning to guard against such tendencies. Emphasize that parents are responsible to teach their daughters, both by instruction and by example, virtues of character and homemaking skills. Another truth this lesson should teach is that both man and woman, husband and wife, need virtuous character to enjoy divine blessing.

The character of a virtuous woman radiates a beauty that glorifies God. Contrary to humanistic philosophy, a woman's highest fulfillment is found in submission to God's plan.

Lesson Aim: To explain the Scriptural role of women.

Theme Verses: Proverbs 31:10-11. Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

Lesson Text

Proverbs 11:16 A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong *men* retain riches.

Proverbs 12:4 A virtuous woman *is* a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed *is* as rottenness in his bones.

Proverbs 14:1 Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

Proverbs 18:22 *Whoso* findeth a wife findeth a good *thing*, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

Proverbs 19:14 House and riches *are* the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife *is* from the LORD.

Proverbs 31:10-31 ¹⁰ Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price *is* far above rubies. ¹¹ The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. ¹² She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. ¹³ She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. ¹⁴ She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. ¹⁵ She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. ¹⁶ She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. ¹⁷ She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. ¹⁸ She perceiveth that her merchandise *is* good: her candle goeth not out by night. ¹⁹ She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. ²⁰ She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. ²¹ She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household *are* clothed with scarlet. ²² She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing *is* silk and purple. ²³ Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. ²⁴ She maketh fine linen, and selleth *it*; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. ²⁵ Strength and honour *are* her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. ²⁶ She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue *is* the law of kindness. ²⁷ She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. ²⁸ Her children arise up,

and call her blessed; her husband *also*, and he praiseth her.²⁹ Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.³⁰ Favour *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain: *but* a woman *that* feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.³¹ Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

Questions for Study

1. In what ways does a gracious woman retain honor (Proverbs 11:16)?
2. How is a virtuous woman a crown to her husband (Proverbs 12:4)?
3. How does a wise woman build her house? How does a foolish woman pluck it down? See 14:1.
4. Why is virtuous character so valuable (Proverbs 31:10)?
5. What character traits do we see from the activities of a virtuous woman?
6. How does the virtuous woman relate to those outside her home?
7. How can a husband help his wife be a virtuous woman?
8. What responsibilities do parents have in teaching their children the way of virtue?

Analyzing the Passage

Virtuous (Proverbs 12:4) means "morally strong." A virtuous woman has integrity of character. A prudent wife (Proverbs 19:14) is circumspect, carefully weighing matters in order to act intelligently.

The essay of the virtuous woman (Proverbs 31:10-31) is actually a poem in its original Hebrew form, written as an acrostic, all twenty-two verses corresponding to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Some of the activities of a virtuous woman described here, such as buying a field, likely happened in conjunction with her husband. The virtuous woman will invest her time and effort, expecting a return.

Favor and beauty (Proverbs 31:30) without godliness are vanity. Favor is often merely false flattery, and beauty will fade, but a life lived for God will be of great value to any person.

Principles and Applications

1. A virtuous woman is honorable (Proverbs 11:16). Any woman who graciously accepts her God-designed role in life will gain honor. Just as strong men tenaciously hold to riches, a virtuous woman will effective-

ly enhance and secure her reputation by her virtue.

2. A virtuous woman enhances the contribution of her husband (Proverbs 12:4; 31:23). Many great men have given credit to their wives for their success. A wife who deals with the daily details of homelife and willingly sacrifices for her husband frees him for his occupation or service and gives him confidence to reach his greatest potential. Conversely, a wife who openly shames her husband greatly hinders his work and may eventually destroy him.

3. A good wife is a gift from the Lord (Proverbs 18:22; 19:14). No man who has a virtuous wife can credit himself for choosing her. Good marriages are arranged by God's leading, as Abraham's servant understood when he sought a wife for Isaac.

4. The value of virtuous character far exceeds any monetary value (Proverbs 31:10). A woman with a virtuous character may be undervalued by those who are too ignorant to understand true virtue. Even though many women try to promote their self-worth and enhance their physical beauty with make-up and jewels, a woman with a virtuous character will be worth much more than the rarest of gems. Her character is of eternal value.

5. A virtuous woman is trustworthy (Proverbs 31:11-12). The husband of a virtuous wife can fully trust her conjugal fidelity and her practical supervision of the home. He can trust her with all his possessions, confidential information, and his struggles without reserve, knowing she will not extravagantly spend his money, share his secrets, or exploit his weaknesses.

6. A virtuous woman is a willing worker (Proverbs 31:13, 19). She understands her responsibility and will do what it takes to finish the work even though it may be mundane, difficult, and unpleasant. She will exert her best efforts in providing food, clothing, and care for her family.

7. Good economics and financial judgment characterize the virtuous woman (Proverbs 31:14-18). A virtuous woman makes good use of the resources at her disposal. She spends for necessities rather than for knickknacks. When facing tough financial situations, she is content to make do with less. She understands that a bargain is not a bargain if the item is not really needed. Her husband does not need to worry every time she goes shopping.

8. The virtuous woman is compassionate (Proverbs 31:20). In addition

to her work of homemaking, a virtuous woman is aware of the needs outside the home. She is charitable, hospitable, and caring toward the less fortunate and the distressed. Social class does not hinder her concern when helping the needy. She will sacrifice her time, even leaving some work undone at home, when the opportunity to help others presents itself.

9. A virtuous woman meets the needs of her family (Proverbs 31:21, 27). As a family grows, so does the responsibility of caring for them. The future holds no fear for her, for she wisely anticipates the needs of the family and prepares. She provides clothing for the growing children, stores food for future use, and makes everything and everyone as comfortable as she can with the resources she has, unselfishly meeting the needs of her family before her own.

10. The way of virtue brings a woman her greatest fulfillment in life (Proverbs 31:25, 29-31). Contrary to popular belief, a virtuous woman is in the position to experience the greatest joy and satisfaction in life. Many women spend lavishly to beautify themselves or to seek the praise of others, but a virtuous woman will seek to please her Master. By doing so, she will not only receive commendation in this life but also hear the welcome words of our Lord, "Well done!"

Answers to Questions

1. In what ways does a gracious woman retain honor (Proverbs 11:16)? Just as strong men use their strength to guard their riches, so a gracious woman will carefully guard her honor. She will use care when making commitments, so that she does not overextend herself. She will admit her mistakes, and she will order her life with integrity.

2. How is a virtuous woman a crown to her husband (Proverbs 12:4)? She serves in her role to his glory, bringing him to the fullness of his honor. Through her domestic prosperity, she aids in the development of his increasing influence. She supports his authority as she relates to the family. She is submissive and faithful to his authority.

3. How does a wise woman build her house? How does a foolish woman pluck it down? See 14:1.

A wise woman builds harmony and order in the home. She bases her building on the foundational principles God has given for the home. She creates a bond of cohesiveness among members of the home, promoting

unity and structure in homelife.

A foolish woman allows her home to deteriorate through unrest, jealousy, disharmony between her and her husband, unresolved issues, inconsistent discipline, and laziness.

4. Why is virtuous character so valuable (Proverbs 31:10)?

It is valuable because it has implications that reach into eternity. Individuals with virtuous character will be submitted to their God-given role in life, resulting in the greatest blessing to them. Also, a virtuous character is not selfish; therefore, its value extends beyond self and touches all who are influenced by it.

5. What character traits do we see from the activities of a virtuous woman?

She will be trustworthy, industrious, diligent, compassionate and kind-hearted, willing to work long hours, self-motivated, thrifty, and focused to the needs of her household.

6. How does the virtuous woman relate to those outside her home?

A virtuous woman is aware of needs beyond her own sphere at home. She is willing to help where needed, sometimes at the expense of her own work. She is hospitable, welcoming others into her home. Even though she is keenly interested in others around her, she is not a gossip or a busybody.

7. How can a husband help his wife be a virtuous woman?

A husband must help create an environment in which his wife can flourish. He must be decisive in his leadership, yet not demanding. He must honor her and give ample evidence of his gratitude for her efforts. A listening ear, open communication with her, seeking and giving thought to her advice, helping with her work when possible, and providing what she needs to effectively fill her role will go a long way in helping her maintain her virtue.

8. What responsibilities do parents have in teaching their children the way of virtue?

Children must be taught, both by word and by example, to value virtue. Father must be respectful and vocally thankful for the work his wife exerts to meet the needs of the family. Daughters who observe the satisfaction homemaking brings to their mother will desire to become homemakers themselves if God permits. Sons should be taught to seek virtue when in quest of life companions of their own.

Important Teachings

1. A virtuous woman is honorable (Proverbs 11:16).
2. A virtuous woman enhances the contribution of her husband (Proverbs 12:4; 31:23).
3. A good wife is a gift from the Lord (Proverbs 18:22; 19:14).
4. The value of virtuous character far exceeds any monetary value (Proverbs 31:10).
5. A virtuous woman is trustworthy (Proverbs 31:11-12).
6. A virtuous woman is a willing worker (Proverbs 31:13, 19).
7. Good economics and financial judgment characterize the virtuous woman (Proverbs 31:14-18).
8. The virtuous woman is compassionate (Proverbs 31:20).
9. A virtuous woman meets the needs of her family (Proverbs 31:21, 27).
10. The way of virtue brings a woman her greatest fulfillment in life (Proverbs 31:25, 29-31).

Summarizing the Lesson

When a virtuous woman fills her role in life, she will have a positive effect on those she influences. Her family will appreciate her efforts to make homelife peaceful and enjoyable. Mother's Day is a good time to remember the contribution of our mothers; however, our mothers and wives should hear us thanking them more often than once a year. Husbands, be thankful for your wives. Mothers, strive to be a woman of virtuous character. May the next generation be blessed by their godly mothers.

Research Guide

1. Study the example of virtuous womanhood in 1 Samuel 25:3, 14-38.
2. Read Titus 2:3-5 for some inspirational direction for the virtuous woman.