

A PORTRAIT OF NOBILITY

*A Simple
Devotional on
Biblical
Womanhood*



A Portrait of Nobility

*A Simple Devotional on
Biblical Womanhood*

*Drawn from the Sage Advice of
King Lemuel's mother
Proverbs 31*

by
Matt Timmons
Teaching elder/Pastor
Hopewell Church



Hopewell



To:
My wife, Elizabeth,
who exemplifies and embodies
the spirit of a noble woman.

"You surpass them all."


Hopewell



WELCOME

We at Hopewell Church hope you find this devotional study to be helpful in understanding more about what it means to be a God fearing woman.

For more in depth teaching we invite you to check out our website or visit our services.

Hopewell is a Bible based church in Ashland, Ohio. Our aim is to worship and serve Christ alone and bring every area of life under His lordship.

We'd love for you to join us in the worship of His Name.

Sundays 10:30 am
@ Hedstrom Plastics
100 Hedstrom Drive
Ashland, OH 44805

All Scripture quotes are from the English Standard Version

Copyright 2017


Hopewell



A Portrait of Nobility

Part I: Introduction

Part II: Her Worth

Part III: Her Work

Part IV: Her Worship


Hopewell



Part I

INTRODUCTION

*“The words of King Lemuel.
An oracle that his mother taught him.”*

Proverbs 31:1


Hopewell



CHAPTER 1

WHAT A WOMAN SHOULD BE

Proverbs 31 contains a description of the “virtuous woman.” As one puritan author put it, it is “designed to show what women should make of themselves.”

Sitting on the racks of every grocery store are magazines with pictures of women. They are billboards that announce “this is what a woman should be” to every person waiting in line for check out.

Hollywood movies present us with the “successful” woman. Garbed in her designer pants suit and stiletto high heels, she roughs up the bad guy and takes down armies of villains. She stays in the office long into the night until her corporate duties are done, not giving any thought to husband or child. She is elegant, fashionable, prosperous, stern, tender, and (of course) thin.

We can hear the silver screen make its ever so implicit announcement that she is “what woman should make of themselves.”

In contrast to the Hollywood’s depictions the pages of scripture present us with a much different portrait of femininity. Proverbs 31 gives us a distinct look at the Second Eve. Just as Christ is the Second Adam, the great Redeemer and fulfillment of the law, the excellent woman we read about here is the fulfillment of womanhood. She stands as the full embodiment of what femininity is and gives us a pattern for which we should strive. The Proverbs 31 is the redeemed woman in full color.

As the heavenly standard, let us put the proverbs 31 woman in mind and prepare to emulate her.

Application:

To whom are you comparing yourself? What are you striving to be? What would you consider to be the standard by which you are measuring yourself? Let's remember that the sermons preached by the images on Cosmo and in prime time television are evil. Instead, let's make sure we find our identity in Scripture.

The Proverbs 31 woman isn't so much about getting up early, sewing clothes, or achieving perfection. The heart of the matter is that she was dedicated to walking in virtue.

-Darlene Schacht


Hopewell



CHAPTER 2

MOTHER KNOWS BEST

Let's not forget that this is first and foremost a word to men. The passage wasn't originally designed for a woman's devotional or study group. This was a homeschool lesson directed specifically for a young man. It was, shall we say, ancient dating advice.

Even though the virtuous woman isn't described until verse 10, verse 1 gives us her context. It tells us that Solomon stole these words from King Lemuel, whoever he was, and Lemuel got it from his mother when he was a wee lad.

Lemuel's mother set before her son the ideal marriage candidate; the single soulmate that Lemuel should seek. His mother knew that he, as a prince, could have any woman, and even many women. He was the king to be, and he could fill his harem with whatever (or whomever) might delight his personal appetites. She knows this, and she knows its danger. Proverbs 7 was not new to the bookshelves of the ancient world. Momma Lemuel knew that it led only to the grave.

Wisdom necessitated direct teaching. A homeschool lesson was administered. Lemuel's mother set before her child the wisdom of womanhood. She directed his royal heart to that which would profit him and bring him the most joy, most fulfilment, most security, wealth, and satisfaction.

In sum, Lemuel's mother first practiced what she preached. She, herself,

was wise to train up her child in the way he should go and set before him the way of life.

Application:

In what ways do you find Lemuel's mother to be the embodiment of the wise woman? Are you being diligent in training your children whom they should love, court, and marry?

Take time to think about your son(s) and consider how you might interact with him about his future mate.

*"The mother's heart
is the child's
classroom."*

-Henry Ward Beecher


Hopewell



CHAPTER 3

A MOTHER'S BURDEN

A weight, load, or heaviness. That is what urged Lemuel's mother to speak. She bore on her shoulders and in her heart a burden for her son's purity, protection, and prosperity.

The word is translated differently among versions of the Bible. Some translate it with the word "prophecy." Some translate it "oracle." A few translate the words of Lemuel's mother as "a pronouncement" or "utterance."

The Hebrew word *massaw* is associated with prophetic utterances (see Malachi 1:1). But it literally means a weight or burden. A prophet's message was a burden. He spoke because of the weight of the divine message. He was burdened by a judgment he had to pronounce or consolation he must offer. The solemnity of the word weighed upon him and the deep sense of duty he had to deliver that message sat upon his shoulders.

We do not know for sure whether or not Lemuel's mother was speaking prophetically in the typical sense of the term prophecy. But she did deliver a weighty message. She had a burden for her son. Her heart was heavy because she knew the peril of folly. And she would not be relieved of this burden until she had given full voice to it.

King Lemuel's mother did not speak out of the overflow of her heart, but rather out of the heaviness that pressed it down.

Application:

Many of us would say that our children can be a burden. Their constant demands, trouble, and acting out can irk us to no end. But do we have a real burden for them?

How often do you speak with your children and have talks about life, love, and wisdom? Is your teaching a blessing that flows out of the deep weight you have for them, or is it mostly through scolding and rebukes because you consider them a burden.

"Earth has nothing more tender than a woman's heart when it is the abode of piety."

- Martin Luther


Hopewell



CHAPTER 4

LEMUEL'S LADY

The burden that Lemuel's mother bore had many different facets. The problems of drink, sexual promiscuity, bribery, injustice, oppression all loom as imminent temptations for the prince in her arms. But the greatest burden was that he find a suitable mate.

Thus, she set before him the high goal to which every woman ought to strive. She outlined the gold standard of femininity, and the rule by which every woman ought to be measured.

The Proverbs 31 woman is the divine template. This is not an exhaustive list of qualities by any means. The Apostles help to define her beauty in such places as Titus 2. Yet the portrait Lemuel's mother paints is in vivid color. She is a perfect match for her son. She is the ideal wife, companion, and mother—one that would guarantee Lemuel success, happiness, and abounding peace.

Application:

If you were presented before King Lemuel's mother as a possible match for her son, what would the look on her face be? Would she smile, knowing that you would be a helper fit for him? Or would she be seen biting her lip nervously?

On a sheet of paper list the qualities that the noble woman has in one column. In the right hand column list the opposite qualities. Then put a check by which best describes you.

CHAPTER 5

BEAUTY BEYOND LIPSTIC

We have said that Lemuel's mother paints a portrait of the ideal match for her son. Yet, as we look at the canvas, we do not see any outward qualities of beauty. We know she is well dressed, for she clothes her house well. But nothing is said about how her hair is styled, how much rouge she wears, or even if that material she's using was bought at a name brand store.

The closest we get to any type of outward description is a passing comment about the strength of her arms. She's not dainty, but she's definitely attractive. She won't be found on the cover of Cosmo, but she's lovely. We stop and stare. We behold her and we have an awe for her.

That's because the noble lady is the epitome of one who fears God. Her beauty supersedes skin. It is the beauty of holiness that stirs our wonder: She's faithful, wise, diligent, entrepreneurial, loving, talented, and strong. While we do not know the measurements of her waistline or the color of her hair, we know she is stunning in her own right.

Application:

Do you measure your life more by how you look or by how you act? Is your reflection in the mirror more important to you than the house you maintain and the obedience that you render to God?

The goal of godly womanhood is not to become a goddess, be it one of beauty or in public acclaim. The goal is to conform; to become a woman of excellence and fulfill Mother Lemuel's ideal.

CHAPTER 6

POETRY IN MOTION

We are about to dive into the study and begin to examine what exactly makes for a noble woman. All that has been said to this point has been introduction. Let us take a few moments to note the structure of the passage we are to study.

This portion of Scripture is arranged as an acrostic poem. It consists of twenty-two verses, each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. We would expect that this form was chosen for memory purposes.

Composing a systematic poem about the ideal wife would make it easier for young girls to learn and model from their earliest days. As young boys learned their abc's and wrote out their daily lessons, they would be able to bear in mind who should steal away their affections.

Whether Lemuel's mother composed these words in this poetic fashion and sung it to him on his bed at night, or drilled it into him so perfectly that he was able to create the poem himself, doesn't matter. What matters is that the image of this woman was seared in the deepest regions of his heart and mind.

Solomon wanted the same for the children of God. That's why he incorporated it into his curriculum of Proverbs. From that time since, in every covenant household, this poem has been read, memorized, and reflected upon.

Application:

Take a few moments to begin to commit some of this passage to memory. While you are at it, meditate on how important Lemuel's mother was to her son. As you seek to emulate the noble woman, do not forget how Lemuel's mother embodied her own teaching. And be sure to walk the talk yourself.

WANT MORE PROVERBS?

Listen to Hopewell's teaching series

[LISTEN NOW](#)


Hopewell



CHAPTER 7

A WORKING OUTLINE

For our last note of introduction, let's take a second to note the structure of this portion of Scripture. While the acrostic method may have been useful to the Hebrew children when memorizing this passage, it doesn't work well for us in our English translations.

One of the ways we can easily remember this section is through an abbreviated outline. The text can be easily recalled and reflected upon when we remember that it deals with the three W's of a noble woman:

- I. Her worth [10-12]
- II. Her work [13-27]
- III. Her worship [28-31]

The first section will deal with how valuable a noble woman is. We will be made to consider that just as wisdom is better than rubies, a wise woman is esteemed to be much more precious.

The second section, which lays out the woman's work, reminds us that a God fearing lady doesn't sit around eating Bon Bons nor have time for soap operas. She's engaging in God's work, taking dominion, and showing all the world just how much she's worth.

In the last section we see her worship. She is commended for her diligence and is given highest honors by her family. This section reveals how a godly woman really is the "queen of the home."

Application:

Read through Proverbs 31:10-31. Mark where the three W's begin and end. Call a friend today and share some of the insights you've gained over the first few days of this study. Summarize the 3 W's for her and talk about the connection between one's worth, work, and worship.

Woman takes her being from man, man takes his well-being from woman.

- Thomas Adams

Part II
The Noble Woman



HER WORTH

PROVERBS 31:10-27


Hopewell



CHAPTER 8

A RARE JEWEL

"An excellent wife who can find?"

Proverbs 31:10

They say that there are 7 billion people in the world. Women, of course, account for approximately half of the populous. This means the world is teeming with people possessing the XX chromosomes. But out of that wide pool of women, how many can be qualified as “excellent?”

Women who would be characterized by their lack of virtue are, as they say, “a dime-a-dozen.” Singles bars, grocery stores, and homes abound with them. They can be bimbos, nags, gossips, self-centered, rude, and/or mouthy. Their traits are just as multifaceted as their sheer number.

But the fact remains, the daughters of the devil far supersede the ever so rare jewel of godly womanhood.

You can even look through the stained glass windows of any given church and you will find scores of women who lack character, motivation, and the ability to be trusted.

In a world filled with women, a woman who truly fears God is difficult to find. Over the course of the next few days, we’ll be considering different


Hopewell



kinds of women that exist in the world. As we do so, consider where you stand. Does your faith separate you? Does your faith in God and obedience cause you stand out from the mass of humanity?

Application:

Pray to God and ask Him to make you different. Tell Him that you do not want to be another fish in the sea of sinful humanity, but rather to be fully devoted to doing His will. While in prayer, make a confession of sin by listing ways you have conformed to the pattern of “ordinary” women

"It is a mercy to have so near a friend to be a helper to your soul and to stir up in you the grace of God."

- Richard Baxter


Hopewell



CHAPTER 9

THE LORD'S BEAUTY PAGEANT

"An excellent wife who can find?"

Proverbs 31:10

In the book of Ester, King Astuarus went through all the kingdom collecting beautiful girls. But if his search had focused on virtue rather than simply being a beauty pageant, would it really have been a contest? Better question: Would there have been any contestants?

If there were, there would not likely have been many. Were it to be likened to a reality show, most women would have been voted off early on in the show.

Indeed, a woman who is "excellent" is hard to come by. Just like a diamond, she is unusual because she possesses qualities that are not often cultivated among your ordinary, run of the mill woman.

But let us be clear: this is not about success, fame, fortune, or fortitude. Many women have these things. In and of themselves, these are nothing. We must remember that the core of the Proverbs 31 woman is her heart. All the things we will see her do (and all the success that she gains) is built upon her reverence for God.

This woman stands out from the rest because she takes God's word to


Hopewell



heart. While the patterns of sin are deeply entrenched in the hearts of the masses, she radiates with the rays of holiness.

Application:

Pop culture is filled with different “kinds” of women (promiscuous, elitist, etc). Make a list of traits that do not represent a “woman of virtue,” but are common to females in our society. Beside each, rate yourself on a scale of 1-10.

Pray to God and ask Him for deliverance from those vices you find to be most notorious in your life.

"The wise way to form an opinion about possible partners is to find out their reputation, watch how they act in company, how they dress and talk, and note whom they select as friends."

- J. I. Packer


Hopewell



CHAPTER 10

PRICELESS

"An excellent wife who can find?"

Proverbs 31:10

Experts estimate that a house wife is worth around \$112,000. These calculations are based on a 40 hour work week of \$37,000 and approximately \$75,000 in overtime pay (roughly 55+ hours).

These computations were based on the woman's service as laundry operator, facilities manager, teacher, taxi, cook, psychologist, janitor, etc.

Charles Spurgeon once said that most Ph.D's are fiddle dee-dee's. That certainly applies here to the "experts." Any man worth his salt will tell you that Solomon was much closer in his assessments. A god fearing wife is worth much more; she is more precious than jewels. She might not put her husband in the top 1% tax bracket, but he esteems her as such.

Beyond the services she provides for her household, a man sees her companionship as priceless. She is not just his help mate in all that she does to assist him, she is a friend, a confidant, and a counselor. She gives him peace, pleasure, and happiness. She truly is his helper in every sense of the term.


Hopewell



Application:

Compare the worth of a noble woman with the detriment a woman of vice brings. Read Proverbs 7; 14:1; 12:4; 21:19. What flaws are described in each passage?

Can you think of other ways a woman can be unwise and drain her husband, household, and family's financial standing?

ENJOYING THIS EBOOK?

Share it with your friends!

SHARE

Point them to this link on your social media platforms


Hopewell



CHAPTER 11

TRUST: THE MOST PRECIOUS COMODITY

"The heart of her husband trusts in her."

Proverbs 31:11

Scroll through the Proverbs 31 woman and you will find that she does a great job of adding to the family's financial stability. She's buying & selling, she's getting good deals at the market, and exercising frugality.

While her gifts and graces may add to the overall household income, what makes her priceless is that she is trustworthy.

Trust is a precious commodity and no marriage can thrive without it. Marriages are built on fidelity, commitment, and unbroken promises. The old wedding ceremonies reflect this when during the exchange of rings the couples say, "This ring I give you as a token and pledge of my constant faith and abiding love."

If a woman is flirtatious with other men or somehow causes her husband to be continually paranoid (albeit in her choice of entertainment, manner of dress, spending habits, or sloth), the house becomes unstable. Tension fills the home and an argument is always just around the corner.


Hopewell



When a man has full confidence of his wife's love and knows that she will fulfill all her responsibilities, there is peace that fills the home.

Since he does not have any anxieties about leaving the house in the morning, he is able to concentrate on his work and be productive in it.

Application:

Take an inventory of your relationship to your husband (or husband to be). Do you have any secrets you are withholding from him? Is your Facebook or social media account open to him? Do you hide any messages from other men? Are there any relationships that you have with other men that cause him to be uncomfortable? Does your husband feel that he needs to be your babysitter, constantly watching over you and checking in to see what you are doing?

Consider how you can build trust in your relationship. What things could you do? Is there anything that causes him to “raise an eyebrow” of suspicion?

Speak with him about these things and ask for his honest assessment.


Hopewell



CHAPTER 12

ROMANTICALLY INVOLVED

"The heart of her husband trusts in her."

Proverbs 31:11

It is interesting to note that the old Puritan theologians linked this verse with the commandment dealing with adultery. The seventh commandment deals with the healthy trusting relationship between a man and his wife.

So we stress again the fact that the woman who is trusted is one who is faithful.

Yet we would be remiss if we did not take a moment to consider how this verse implies to the godly woman's romantic involvement with her husband. A god fearing woman should make it her aim to fulfill her husband's desires, and (by doing so) build the bond of trust that exists between them.

Much can be said about intimacy in marriage, but one thing ought to be noted here: Romantic love, in its purest form, is an act of trust and it builds trust.

To be sure, sex can be abused (and no such abuse should be tolerated). No one should have distasteful demands or do anything in the bedroom that creates distrust. However, when a woman


Hopewell



delights herself in her husband and they enjoy each other, the relationship is strengthened in a transcendent way.

Paul speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 6. When a man and woman come together they become “one flesh.” They create a mystical bond that surpasses each person’s individuality.

Part of this supra-physical bond is the trust that this proverb highlights. The oneness that the man and woman experience is their co-dependence and mutual interconnection.

The love trust that brings the two together ends up being fortified as the man has his physical interests satisfied by his loving wife.

Application:

Read Genesis 2:24-25 and 1 Corinthians 6:16. Reflect on the implications of what it means to become “one flesh.” Apply the passage appropriately.

CHAPTER 13

NEVER AFRAID OF WHAT WOULD BE SAID

"The heart of her husband trusts in her."

Proverbs 31:11

Trust is founded on fidelity, but it is also built upon confidentiality.

No man is perfect. He has a multitude of flaws. You, being his wife, are privy to almost all of them. You have a close-up view on virtually every defect in his life.

But what do you do with this knowledge? When it comes to a husband's trust a noble woman is able to conceal such things and bury them all in love. She does not broadcast them to her friends or say anything that would put him to public shame. In the mist of her conversations, she demonstrates the utmost prudence, making sure that she speaks of him only in such a way that exalts and honors him as her beloved head.

If she has corrections or counsels, she thinks twice before doing so to consider if it might better be overlooked. If she does deem it necessary, she is sure to speak to him privately and with the meekness that becomes the feminine mystique.

Some women complain that their husbands never speak to them on a deeper level of communication. However, this is sometimes due to the fact that he doesn't believe he can. Her tendency to gossip or pick on him


Hopewell



makes him afraid to share his feelings or seek her counsel. He cannot share his heart because he is afraid she will share it too!

A noble woman will fulfill her calling before God when she is able to hold her tongue and conceal those things that may damage her husband's confidence in her. She will epitomize the "meek and quiet spirit" that Peter commends in his epistle.

Application:

In what ways are you a "husband-basher?" Do you have minor annoyances that you joke about? Are there things about which you gripe openly? Could your relationship benefit from a little more secrecy on your part?

Make an effort to praise your husband publicly 10 times each day this week. If you are out with your friends, make an effort to tell them about something you really appreciate about him.

STAY IN TOUCH

[Subscribe Now!](#)

Subscribe to our newsletter!


Hopewell



CHAPTER 14

SO GOOD

"She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life."

Proverbs 31:11

Consider these words from Matthew Henry's commentary:

"[The noble woman] makes it her constant business to do him good, and is afraid of doing any thing, even through inadvertency, that may turn to his prejudice. She shows her love to him, not by a foolish fondness, but by prudent endearments, accommodating herself to his temper, and not crossing him, giving him good words, and not bad ones, especially when he is out of humour; studying to make him easy, to provide what is fit for him both in health and sickness, and attending him with diligence and tenderness when anything ails him; nor would she, no, not for the world, wilfully do anything that might be a damage to his person, family, estate, or reputation.

"And this is her care all the days of her life; not at first only, or now and then, when she is in a good humour, but perpetually; and she is not weary of the good offices she does him: She does him good, not only all the days of his life, but of her own too; if she survive him, still she is doing him good in her care of his children, his estate, and good name, and all the concerns he left behind him."


Hopewell



Application:

Make a list. In the first column list the good you do for your husband. In the second column make a list of other ways you could do your husband good.

Think about other women you know while you do it. What things do they do that you could mimic?



Find us on
Facebook


Hopewell



Part III
The Noble Woman



HER WORK

PROVERBS 31:13-27


Hopewell



CHAPTER 15

GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL WORKER

"She seeks wool and flax and works with willing hands."

Proverbs 31:13

Thanks to modern manufacturing methods women do not need to seek "wool and flax" to make their own clothes. They still need to "work with willing hands" though.

We are beginning the second major section in the description of the noble woman. We have looked at her worth and now we will begin to focus on her work. It is not without cause that this section (which is also the longest section) begins with these words.

One may also make the argument that part of her worth is her interest in work. She does not bemoan the fact that she has responsibilities. She delights in the fact that she has opportunity to serve God and take dominion.

To be sure, the focus of this verse is not so much the work that she does as it is the attitude in which she does it. The word "willing" has the sense of "pleasure" or "delight." The sense then is that she takes up her duties with a cheerful heart and does them with a whole-hearted vigor.

To say that a woman's work is never done is not only a glaring understatement, it only gives half the picture. The work she does can be

difficult, intensely menial, and even gross. There are diapers to change, laundry to fold, toilets to clean, kids to motivate, and meals to prepare.

Nevertheless, the noble woman tackles all this (and more!) with an air of joy, knowing that it is her divine calling and kingdom service.

Application:

There's no doubt that you do a lot in a day. After all, "a woman's work is never done." Keep track of how you do your work. What kind of attitude do you have while doing the laundry, cooking the meals, or washing the dishes?

Make a prayer sheet of those projects in which you find little to no pleasure or do grudgingly. Over the next week, ask God to help you delight in them so that you can work with willing hands.

*"Though she is the weaker vessel,
she is yet made strong by wisdom,
grace, and the fear of God."*

- Matthew Henry


Hopewell



CHAPTER 16

A BARGAIN HUNTER

"She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar."

Proverbs 31:14

The noble woman knows the power of a dollar, and she takes pains to get the biggest bang for her buck.

We recognize that she's not cheap. She will not settle for any old thing. She wants the best that she can get, and she is willing to have it imported when the local markets will not provide.

On the other hand, we shouldn't think that she has overly exquisite tastes either. She is not infatuated with name brands or designer goods. She's about quality. She desires that her family be well supplied, healthy, and suited out with the "good portion" that the Lord provides.

In all reality though, it isn't so much about the kind of food, the style of clothes, or the types of shoes her kids wear as much as it is about her diligence to provide and exercise a frugal spirit. She doesn't want to be wasteful by dumping too much of the family's hard earned money into something that isn't worth it. She's willing to look around for the best deals and more than willing to go a little farther to make a purchase that will benefit them in the long run.

In that regard, she's mindful to provide her family with wholesome home


Hopewell



cooked meals. The occasional pizza night is certainly enjoyed, but she doesn't allow their finances to be sapped by too many fast food meals. Dining out is a pleasure & joy for the family, but the delicacies of love and thrift are the cuisine enjoyed in the godly woman's home.

Application:

Go online and do some research. Determine if you are a "saver or a spender." Create a budget if you don't have one.

Talk with your mother and/or grandmother about the best ways they have cut expenses and saved money over the years. Ask some of the ladies in your church for similar advice.

WANT MORE PROVERBS?

Listen to Hopewell's teaching series

[LISTEN NOW](#)


Hopewell



CHAPTER 17

AN ECONOMIST OF TIME

"She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens."

Proverbs 31:15

Today's women have yet another reason to thank God. Due to the comforts of modernity, ladies can sleep in a little longer than the women of ancient times. Providing food for the household is much easier since we can buy a loaf of bread at the store rather than making it from scratch.

Modern conveniences do not erase the principle supplied in this verse though. This passage teaches us the lesson of time management. Adam Clarke states it succinctly when he says in regards to this verse that the god fearing woman is "an economist of time."

A noble woman might not have to fix breakfast before 4 am, but she's still keeping track of the daily schedule. She makes sure to be up in time to get the kids set for their day. They are fed, brushed, and dressed in good time. She may even pounce upon the laundry in order to get a head start on the day.

She also knows when ballet and baseball practice start, and she arranges her schedule accordingly. She knows the agenda and adjusts her schedule so that she gets the groceries and has dinner ready for the family.


Hopewell



What is apparent by her routine is that her time is not her own. It belongs to her family. Her time is their time, and she lives every minute of the day in service to her household. Bruce Waltke summarizes it well when he says that “she puts the well-being of her household before her own comfort.”

Breaks in the day are obviously needed. We shouldn't think that the Proverbs 31 woman was completely deprived of sleep or never took any kind of siesta. However, we do learn that she wasn't overly interested in excessive amounts of “me time.” She sought to invest herself in the service of others.

Application:

Evaluate your weekly schedule. What does it say? Does it reflect too much “me time?” If you do not have kids, how can you best use your time in service to the Lord?

*Without women...the home, cities,
economic life, and government would
virtually disappear...Men cannot do
without women.*

- Martin Luther


Hopewell



CHAPTER 18

BAREFOOT & PREGNANT IN THE KITCHEN?

*"She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands
she plants a vineyard."*

Proverbs 31:16

Feminists joke about and poke fun at the concept of Biblical womanhood. They believe patriarchy and homemaking to be a form of imprisonment where a woman ends up being shackled to some kitchen appliance.

While the woman's main realm of dominion is within the home, she has every bit of freedom to be an entrepreneur and contribute to the family income. Here, in verse 16, we have the iconic verse that demonstrates just that very thing.

In this one sentence we find the godly woman's versatility and keen business sense in full color. We see her careful investigation (she considers a field), her economic dexterity (she buys it), and her determined diligence (she plants it). Since the purchase came as a result of the "fruit of her hands" it is likely that it was her business expertise that earned the money for the deal in the first place.

The woman's commercial enterprising, of course, never interferes with her home life. What she does is an extension of the home and service to her family. It provides opportunities for them to be involved in each


Hopewell



other's lives. She is not like the modern feminist who's life is consumed with her career and unable to nurture her children or spend quality time with them.

Of course, no woman is mandated to buy and sell. It may even occur at different periods of life. She may initiate contracts and engage in commerce early on, and then back off when children are young. She may start up once the kids are older or out of the house. All is relative to God's particular calling and the season of life.

What is important to see is that the woman's skills and powers of dominion are vastly arrayed. A noble woman reflects God's creative power and is a vital part of the family economy.

Application:

Tonight at dinner discuss the matter of your being an entrepreneur and commercially engaged. Would it be profitable to the household for you to start up a small business? Do you have the time? How might you contribute to the family income? What gifts do you have? What services could you provide and to whom? How could the rest of the family be involved?

CHAPTER 19

ROBUST HEALTH

"She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong."

Proverbs 31:17

"Inner strength and a tenacious trust in God translates into outer strength and physical vitality and vigor." These words from Middletown Bible Church aptly summarize this verse.

Many woman today have lost muscle tone and suffer physically because they have been overly infatuated with their phone screens, soap operas, and idleness. Their sloth is creating a paralysis.

But the noble woman lives an active life. Her arms are well defined because she's constantly lifting babies and toddlers all through the day. Her Fitbit logs thousands of steps because she is busy running errands, making beds, and pushing the vacuum.

Not only does she have good physical health, but her emotions are spritely. Jay Adams, a Christian counselor, relates how he has encountered many women over the course of his career who had struggled with depression. Frequently he would find that their glum outlook was due to their being slack in their duties. He would advise them to get the kid's lunches made, iron the shirts, and wash the socks. Inevitably, when they came in for the next meeting, they would confess that they felt great.


Hopewell



While men typically have a regimen that they follow in their work, women often have more freedom with their daily routine. This is a blessing from God, but it also requires personal discipline. When a woman fears God, she will not only keep her house in order, she will be girded with strength.

Application:

Keep track of your screen time. How much of the day is relegated to social media, television, internet surfing, or other forms of entertainment? Consider whether these things are taking you away from God's calling and if they should be replaced with some more productive activity.

If she reflects the Creator and assumes the posture of a graceful servant, she cannot help but command high respect and honor.

- Jeanne Hendricks


Hopewell



CHAPTER 20

RAGGED GRACE

"She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle."

Proverbs 31:18-19

A lady can be tempted to feel ashamed of herself when getting to this point in our poem. This woman does it all. She's even sewing the house's clothing.

First, let's remember that history has progressed and the Lord has caused us to be the beneficiaries of a glorious heritage of faith. Christianity has caused the Western world to expand its technological prowess and flood the market with low cost clothing.

Some would think that this verse (and one's like them) mean that a woman must sew her own clothing and have some know-how when it comes to handling a sewing machine. This, however, is forcing the text to say something it doesn't. This is yet another example of the woman's dexterity and industrious spirit.

We should be glad that quality clothing is just a click away. Moreover, we should be glad when a woman sees to it that her house is well dressed (be it by needles or by nickels). A woman demonstrates the spirit of nobility, no matter what manner the clothes be gotten.


Hopewell



But the shame that may flush your cheeks, may still be valid to some degree. There's no way we measure up.

We must take a moment and remember that the woman spoken of here is the heavenly ideal. She is God's standard of womanhood. For that reason, she should put us to shame. We are sinners, and every woman on earth is born in the likeness of Mother Eve. Unlike Mrs. Noblewoman, we have suffered the effects of the fall and can be sluggardly, selfish, and cantankerous.

Let's admit it, sometimes we may put our hand to the distaff, but it's just because we desire to knock our husband with it, rather than make him a shirt.

This is where we may remember Jesus. Though a male, He has fulfilled for us the whole of God's law. His diligence in service, His lowly spirit, and His willing submission merits for us life and salvation.

The work we do now is a thank offering we make to Him. Through His power, and in gratitude for His mercy, we rise each morning to pursue His calling in our lives.

Application:

Apply the grace of God to your life as a wife, mother, sister, and friend. Today, rest in the fact that your failings have been covered by the blood of Christ. Let the work you do be driven by the fact that Christ's work as Mediator has purchased eternal life and made you a daughter of the King.

CHAPTER 21

A SCHOLAR TOO

"She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue."

Proverbs 31:26

We should never forget that the Proverbs 31 woman is considered noble, not because she has worked her fingers to the bone, but because she has been trained in the school of Christ. She's studied God's law and reflected on the teaching of Scripture. As a result, she abounds with wisdom.

Her friends come to her in order to draw from these wells of understanding. She is able to counsel and console because she has lived in communion with God and given astute attention to what He has revealed.

We recognize that, due to her place of submission, the Lord does not permit a woman to take up an office in the church (1 Timothy 2:12).

In our egalitarian age, we must be quick to acknowledge this and humbly accept the limits God has set on a woman's role. In looking at the expansive duties the noble woman has, we can be tempted to say, "Anything a man can do, a woman can do better."

Yet, we rejoice that, within the bounds of her role, God provides ample opportunity for a woman to give expression to the wisdom she has gleaned from Scripture. Her children dwell under her tutelage,


Hopewell



and her husband benefits from her insights. Her friends confide in her because they recognize how knowledgeable she is when it comes to relationships, contracts, and duty. Younger ladies gather around her so that they may absorb her depth of understanding. And she is happy to admonish, exhort, and offer advice when called upon to do so.

But perhaps one thing that draws all ears to her is her positive tone. On her tongue is “the teaching of kindness” (or, as it can be translated, “the law of steadfast love”). When she speaks, it isn’t just a bunch of fuddy duddy prohibitions. She is so helpful because she speaks gracefully and encourages right living. Rather than being critical and condemning, she’s warm, constructive, and full of good things.

Application

Who have been the ladies who have been your mentors and examples? What was it that drew you to them? What are their chief qualities and how can you begin to implement them into your own life?

Also, what role does the study of Scripture have in your own life? Do you have personal devotion time? Are you involved in a small group study? Are you sitting under God’s word in worship regularly? If not, try and make these a part of your regular rhythms of life.

Part IV
The Noble Woman



HER WORSHIP

PROVERBS 31:28-31


Hopewell



CHAPTER 22

PRAISE & HONOR

"Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her."

Proverbs 31:28

"My Katie is in all things so obliging and pleasing to me that I would not exchange my poverty for the riches of Croesus." Such were the words of Martin Luther, the 16th c. German Reformer, regarding his wife Katie.

Katie Luther emulated the spirit of the Noble woman. She raised 10 children, four of whom were adopted. She also cared for the many seminary students that stayed in their house through the duration of their studies. Katie also managed the finances of the family and took care of the vegetable garden, orchard, fishpond, and barnyard animals, even to the butchering of them herself. Luther was often ill, and Katie was able to minister to him in his illnesses because of her great medical skill.

It is no wonder that her husband had such sparkling things to say about her. The honors were certainly due her and were his natural response to her amazing usefulness as a helpmate.

This final section of the Proverbs 31 passage deals with the noble woman's worship. When a woman performs her duty with excellence

and a spirit of contentment, it is not thankless work. She is rewarded with the praises of her household.

It is true that she does not fish for compliments. Neither is her work done simply for the admiration of her husband. But, under normal circumstances, such a woman will be honored. Her accolades will not be limited to a momentary card on Mother's Day or a dinner out on her birthday. She will be revered by her children, celebrated by her husband, and even admired by her neighbors.

Application

Where is your focus? Is it on the work you are doing in service to God, or is it on the regard you get from your husband? If the latter, it is a form of idolatry: a worship of worship. It is a desire to please men and be pleased, rather than pleasing God and being content with being an "unprofitable servant" (Lk. 17:10).

This week make a special point of prayer & devotion to "do all to the glory of the Lord." Try to remind yourself of it in the different chores you do. As you cook, say to yourself, "This meal is for Christ more than it is for my children." Think something similar when you pick up the kids and fulfill your other duties.

CHAPTER 23

PRAISE: A NATURAL RESPONSE

"Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all."

Proverbs 31:28-29

Ordinarily, a baseball game is a pretty placid event. The crowd sits mildly by pitch after pitch. Sometimes there can be long stretches of innings where there is not a single hit. Fans may even doze in the warmth of the sun due to boredom.

But should a solid crack of the bat be heard, and the ball sails far into the stands in the outfield, the scene immediately transforms. Fans erupt with excitement. They rise to their feet, frantically hooting and hollering. Some have even been known to break forth into a chicken like flapping of the arms.

For the next few seconds the docile stadium transforms into a grand crescendo of applause and adulation. And it is all due to one player's momentary performance. His excellence brings forth a flash mob of ruckus praise.

Admiration is, ordinarily, the direct natural response to greatness. When people behold something unusually stunning, the automatic reaction is to celebrate it and robustly commend its perceived value.


Hopewell



This is how Proverbs 31 seems to describe the honors that fall to the noble woman. It is true that husbands and children should be diligent to give honor where honor is due. We recognize that to withhold thanks and appreciation is sinful. But the praise that comes to the noble woman is not forced. Neither is it done simply out of rote. It is the natural response; the explosive regard that comes as a result of beholding something truly supreme.

“You surpass them all.” These words burst forth from his lips, not because a Hallmark holiday told him to say it. It is a direct result of what he has beheld in his wife. His heart explodes with gratitude because he cannot help but do so.

Application

It may be that you are not as appreciated as you should be. If this is the case, how do you respond? What is the best way to handle this kind of situation so that you can continue to serve with joy?

If you are cherished & praised sufficiently in your home, how would you counsel someone who struggling with their lack of regard in the home?

Alternative Application

Who do you know that exemplifies the nobility of Proverbs 31? Who might benefit from some encouragement & praise? Write them a short note & send it to them.

CHAPTER 24

TWO DEVILISH VICES

"Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised."

Proverbs 31:30

Interestingly, Lemuel's mother takes a moment to list two imposter virtues. Throughout this passage the noble woman has been characterized by her utility. She is of infinite value because she is a helper supreme (Genesis 2:18).

But here a warning is sounded forth. Two devilish characteristics must be exposed for the great deceptions that they are. The noble woman has two evil step-sisters who are just as magnetic, but not nearly as profitable.

Some women are compelling because they possess a magical power known as charm. To be sure, charm can be a wonderful quality when it comes in the form of encouragement, wit, or a kind gesture. But charm can also be manipulative. As the passage says, its dark side is deceptive. Whether manifested in the form of some personable eloquence, pleasing persuasion, or seductive enticement, a deceptively charming woman can lock in a man and enrapture his attention.

Other women have mesmerizing physical beauty. It may be naturally

endowed, or it may be enhanced by flaunted immodesty. Either way, it has a hypnotic power over unwitting men.

This warning reminds us that this passage was first directed to a man. He must beware of the folly of entering into a relationship with a woman who has no other claim than carnal pleasure. Such a pursuit will be unsatisfyingly empty (vain) and will not profit in the long term. Nevertheless, women may profit by considering which of the three they mirror most. A woman who fears the Lord may be eloquent and spellbindingly attractive, but such are not her chief attributes. Her fascination with Christ and her service to Him is what set her apart and draws her husband's affections.

In sum, before she is presented to her groom, she is dedicated to being the bride of Christ.

Application:

Earlier in this study we talked about flirtation. Deceptive charm and ill-used beauty are typically expressions of this. Are there other characteristics of a woman that may be used with men? Is there any way that you are breaking (or "bending") your marital vows?



Find us on
Facebook


Hopewell



CHAPTER 25

ROMANCE REVISITED

"Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain."

Proverbs 31:30

Why was Lemuel warned against the charm and beauty of a woman? It was because his mother knew his appetites. She understood that God created men in a unique way and had unique temptations that they needed to resist.

God gave men a more robust sexual desire, one that can be stimulated easily by images or by someone who demonstrates a wooing interest in them. This is why Lady Charm and Miss Beauty have such an allure to him.

To be sure, men must practice restraint and godliness (thus the warning). There is no excuse for inordinate sexual desire or unlawful indulgence. But a noble woman ought to read this verse and understand. She will take to heart the fact that her man has particular interests that need satiated.

Lemuel's mother begins and ends her poem with admonitions that insinuate godly intimacy, and we should not overlook or downplay what the Holy Spirit seeks to suggest. A noble woman may be excused if her house is not in pristine condition or dinner ends up

being carry in pizza on occasion. Such is life. But a woman who fears the Lord will, above all things, seek to gratify her husband romantically and not neglect his God given proclivities.

Remember, all that is listed in Proverbs 31 about the woman's work is not about her "checklist of chores." It certainly isn't a call to a perfectionist spirit either. This inventory of tasks is about her husband and how she might please him. The food she prepares, the field she buys, the kids she clothes are not just daily responsibilities. They are her way of serving her husband. They are everyday examples of how she can delight him.

This notion is also found when the Apostle Paul commands the older women to teach the younger women to "love their husbands." He wasn't solely talking about exchanging recipes and being diligent to find which detergents get his shirts cleanest. Paul's aim was that the younger women would know how to bring their husbands the most happiness—and certainly that included romantic love.

In conclusion, all of the jobs listed in this chapter are a form of romance. They are a service she provides to her groom, and they find their highest expression in the intimacy of the bedroom.

Application:

Consider how you might "charm" your husband.


Hopewell



CHAPTER 25

RIPPLES THROUGH SOCIETY

"Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates."

Proverbs 31:31

"Let her works praise her in the gates." Let these words penetrate.

We learn here that the woman's work has some sort of enduring value. Her dutiful care and loving service have repercussions that flow far beyond her own household and range of duty. They ripple throughout the community and impact the highest quarters of the town. The leaders of society (i.e. those who sit in the gates) find that they are deeply indebted to her for her work.

Had she not poured herself into her daily tasks, the town would not have reaped the benefits. If she had not shown herself to be noble, the town would not be noble itself: The poor would still be miserable, justice would not have been exacted, crime would be more prevalent, and the economy would not be as stable.

Those of the feminist strand who say that a woman should "find her role in society" will do well to know that a healthy home is the best foundation for any culture. When a woman embraces biblical femininity and seeks to order her life according to God's revealed


Hopewell



will, she does a great service to humanity. She helps to put society in its best order and makes it possible for the general public to thrive.

Let us then refuse to hear anyone who wishes to discredit the domestic life and say it has no real or lasting rewards. The work she does in connection to her household has echoes of praise resounding from every corner of the earth. Even the ecclesiastical and civil spheres declare with loud acclamations that they have reaped great blessings from her lively faith.

Application:

Do you feel like your work is done in vain? Does it feel like a “dead end job” or a useless monotony? Write a letter to yourself and tell yourself that such is not the case. Put research into it. Show with facts how your home is a fundamental building block for your larger community and describe what it would be like if there were more homes like it.

**Did you like
this book?**

TELL US

Write us a quick note & let us
know how you've
benefited


Hopewell

