

Why the Proverbs 31 Woman May Not Be Your Ultimate Standard After All

I used to hate Proverbs 31.

Yea, I'll admit it. The Proverbs 31 woman used to really irritate me, because she was the impossible standard for every woman.

My friends would get married and try to be the Proverbs 31 woman incarnate, and I'd watch them stress themselves out to be the ultimate homemaker, wife, mother, business owner—the first to rise and the last to go to bed.

And in the end, they would be disillusioned, stressed out and exhausted.

While I realized that Proverbs 31 was, in fact, part of the Bible, which I firmly and unapologetically believe is the inerrant, infallible Word of God, I had a hard time resigning myself to the fact that God would place on women this unattainable goal of becoming the quintessential Proverbs 31 woman.

In our minds, we want to be her.

But in reality, when our children are toddlers and we're trying to balance our homes, husbands, potty training, diapers and dinners; trying to "train up our children in the way they should go" because we want with all our hearts for our kids to serve God; all while trying to hang on to our last shred of sanity ... it almost doesn't seem fair.

She is so calm and collected. We're so frazzled and worn out.

She is adorned in purple. We're adorned in yoga pants and

spit-up.

Her children arise and call her blessed. Our children arise and shout, "No!"

She opens her mouth with wisdom. We open our mouths and read *Goodnight Moon* for the 50th time this week.

So yes, at one time I felt about the same affection her about the same as I feel for Martha Stewart, whose magazine was forbidden to arrive at my address, so my roommate had to have it sent to her dad's house.

It wasn't until I read this book by Courtney Joseph from *Women Living Well* that I realized that God didn't want me to do everything the Proverbs 31 woman did.

He didn't want me to be her.

He just wanted me to have her character.

I'm me. With all my faults and idiosyncrasies, of which are many. I also have some good qualities, which I often give much less attention.

And God wants to reshape my faults, use my good qualities and even my idiosyncrasies to make me the best wife and mother I can be.

Proverbs 31 is here to give us an example of character.

So maybe you won't burn the midnight oil, but your diligence is evident in many other areas.

Maybe you aren't good at haggling over a piece of land, but you rock the coupons, and your frugality is an example to which your friends seek to aspire.

Perhaps you don't make tapestry or even sew, but you're an amazing bargain shopper.

Maybe you look at this list and think, “Man, I don’t have any of these qualities!”

Yeah—I get that. Because I have that thought many times myself. But I have some questions for you: Are you a treasure to your husband? Do your children honor you? Is your home a happy and joyful place to be?

In my post “What Submission Really Means,” I blogged about how my creativity and frugality were causing tension in the home. Though I’m sure my husband appreciated my efforts, he wasn’t terribly impressed with the outcome.

By choosing a happy home over “working with my hands” and being frugal in this area, my home became a happier place.

The Proverbs 31 woman isn’t about us all becoming Stepford wives. God is far more creative than that.

He created you with your personality and capabilities. He even created you with your limitations, which perhaps discourage you from ever trying to become the Proverbs 31 woman.

But you know what?

He doesn’t want to you “become” her, He wants you to be the best wife to your husband you can be.

And that is what this chapter is all about!

Perhaps your husband doesn’t need you to be an entrepreneur. But he does need you to keep the home tidy because he brings clients home a lot.

Rock your homemaking skills!

Perhaps you live on a farm. and so “fine linen” is really impractical, so rock those jeans and flannel.

The Proverbs 31 woman knows her family’s needs and meets them with grace and skill, with love and selflessness.

Those are qualities in which we can all improve.

So now that I understand this chapter better, the Proverbs 31 Woman and I are back on speaking terms again.

And—yes—I want to be like her.

I want to serve my family with grace and skill, love and selfless giving. {eo}

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