

Measuring Up to Perfection

Proverbs 31

“An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.”

Proverbs 31:10

A Proverbs 31 woman. For those of us who have been in church for any amount of time, we find that this woman is set as the standard of perfection for females. A read-through of the last chapter in Proverbs is enough to tire and discourage any woman other than Superwoman! How many of us feel up to the task of being that woman when we wake up in the morning? Certainly not I.

What have been your thoughts and feelings when reading Proverbs 31?

Even the author of this chapter says “An excellent wife, who can find?” Yeah—where is she?

We are constantly being told by the media and the people around us that we are not good enough, and most women today are desperately in need of refreshment and encouragement, not another list of things to do or be. Was Proverbs 31 written to be yet another list for us to measure up to?

Yes and no. There is no denying that God has a set of standards and expectations He has placed for us. As children of God we are to be living Christ-like lives. As women, we are to be reflecting God’s character by being virtuous women. Proverbs 31 may be seen as the outward results of a heart that is being transformed into Christ-likeness, the observable image of a woman after God’s own heart. However, it is important to note that a virtuous woman may not do any of the things listed in Proverbs 31 and yet still be a virtuous woman.

That also leads me to think of the women in my life who exhibit characteristics of a virtue.

Is there a woman you know who has set an example to you of being a godly woman?

These women are not perfect, nor would they claim to be. In fact, humility and a realistic perspective of oneself is one thing that sets a godly woman apart. Just as Paul speaks of the fact that he has not attained perfection and is still “pressing on toward the goal” in Philippians 3:12-14, we, also, are to be striving to be the woman that God intends us to be. This does not mean that we have to accomplish it all in one day. It does not mean that God expects us to be perfect. It means that we are to be living with a focus on becoming that woman that God desires us to be and to be consistently growing toward that.

One of the wise women in my own life says, “Who we are today is who we will become tomorrow.” This shows the fluidity of the growing process. Trying to change into the person we want to be in five years is an overwhelming thought, but what about just being a little more like the person you want to be today? Just today. When we look at the situations we face today and consider how that woman we want to become would handle these situations, that gives us not only a better idea of how to become the woman we know that God desires us to

“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 3:12-14

be, but is a task that seems a little more manageable.

What kind of woman do you want to be five years from now?

How can you live today in a way that will take you to that point in the future?

It is also important to realize that attempting to be this woman apart from a nourishing, sustaining, life-giving relationship with Christ, is only going to lead to burnout and resentment. The New Testament story of Mary and Martha shows us that if we are not taking time to sit at the feet of Jesus and let Him speak to us personally, then we are missing the most important thing, the thing that gives us strength for the tasks of the day, enables us to maintain and nurture the various relationships in our lives, and to play the roles that we are daily required to play.

Mary was not being lazy when she spent time with Jesus. She was most likely taking time from her busy day of responsibilities to do what was foundational for everything else she did. She was soaking in the mindset, priorities, and love of Christ. The heart of a Proverbs 31 woman is the type of heart that Jesus had, and wants to develop in us, as well.

Let Him do work in your life and listen for Him to give you guidance throughout the day. Let Him lavish you with His love so that you are full, healthy, and able to give the same care to others that He desires to give to you.

Now that we see that the idea is to be on a journey of allowing God to work in your life in a way that transforms you into His image, and that gaining the strength for that journey comes from an intimate and nourishing relationship with Christ, we come to the question of what heart characteristics are behind the actions of the Proverbs 31 woman that God desires to develop in us, as well.

A good example is key in understanding any concept. Not only do we have other women in our own lives that set examples for us, but we have been given a number of examples in scripture of godly women who live out the different characteristics of the Proverbs 31 woman. This series will take a look at some of the heart characteristics of a Proverbs 31 woman, the women in scripture who exhibit these characteristics, and how we can allow God to begin developing these things in our lives, as well.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?
