

BECOMING A VALUABLE WIFE

**By Terry Jones, May 11, 2008
Christ's Church at Tiffin, Ohio**

Proverbs 31:10-31

Central Sermon Theme: The poem about the excellent wife presents a pattern for those who want to become a valuable wife.

INTRO. – A cartoon shows a three-year-old, freckle-faced boy in a hallway. His pajamas are unbuttoned, his diaper's bagging, and he's got a little teddy bear dangling on his hand. He's standing in front of his mother and father's bedroom door, which is shut. On the door is a little sign written by a weary mother: "Closed for Business. Motherhood Out of Order." If motherhood at your home is out of order, the Bible provides a pattern for putting motherhood back in order.

Proverbs closes with a poem about the woman of noble character. Each verse begins with a Hebrew letter in successive order. The purpose of this style is to aid the memory in remembering each of the characteristics or actions of the excellent woman. The first sentence asks a rhetorical question, "An excellent wife, who can find?" If you find this woman, value her as a rare treasure. This woman's worth is far above jewels. In Proverbs jewels figuratively describe what is valuable.

If the human author wrote from a man's perspective he may say, "Her worth is far above the value of many camels." Our Holy Land tour group stopped at a shopping area to buy souvenirs. A Jewish businessman became rather infatuated with one of the ladies in our group. He told her husband he would give 30 camels for her. The husband obviously refused his offer. Later that week this couple had a rather heated conflict on the tour bus. The husband said to his wife, "I should have traded you for those 30 camels." She was not amused.

According to Jewish tradition husbands and children recited this poem at the dinner table on Friday evening before the Sabbath. The purpose of the recitation was to prepare the girls in the family to become like this valuable woman. This Scripture prepared young boys to know and value such a valuable woman of excellence and wisdom. As a result the world improves when men and women possess godly character. We can change our world one person at a time from within our homes with the cooperation of an admiring and appreciative husband.

Proverbs 31:10-31 is a Hebrew poem written as an acrostic using the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the twenty-two verses begins with a Hebrew letter in successive order. I do not plan to present this Scripture as it is written with Hebrew letters. This poem is composed with eight stanzas. I will use the eight letters of the word, VALUABLE, to identify the eight characteristics of the valuable wife.

I. V - VALUE EXCELLENCE IN CHARACTER, vv. 10-12

A. Who can find this excellent woman?

1. She is valuable because she is the exception.
2. Because she is so rare it adds to her value.

B. "Her worth is far above jewels."

1. Her husband can completely trust in her.
 - a. She has earned his trust.
 - b. Illus. – Oscar E. Mills was a state trooper in Indiana. On Nov. 30, 1957, at twenty-seven years old, he chased a speedster in his patrol car. He lost control of his car resulting in a tragic wreck. Medics rushed him to the hospital in an unconscious state. His wife went to be with him at his bedside. The days turned into weeks, the weeks became months, and the months became years. After being in a hospital for eight years and 130 days, Oscar Mills died. What was his wife doing the day he died? She was doing what she had been doing the previous eight years and 130 days. She was with him. If you had asked her, "Why?" she would say she just loved her husband. I believe in loyalty.
 - c. He has no lack of gain for this woman is his partner.
 - d. Ex. - An old church song says, "I would be true for there are those who trust me." If someone trusts you, guard that trust.
2. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

C. Illus. - Mother's Day started in a small Methodist church in Grafton, West Virginia in 1876. While teaching a Memorial Day lesson, Anna Reeves Jarvis thought of mothers who had lost their sons in the Civil War. She prayed that one day there could be a "Memorial Day" for mothers. On the day of her mother's death, Anna determined to establish Mother's Day in her honor. On May 12, 1907, the first Mother's Day observance was held. By 1910, Mother's Day spread to

forty-five states, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Canada, and Mexico. On May 8, 1914, President Wilson designated the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day.

D. We honor our mothers because we value excellence in character.

II. A - ASSIST IN SERVICE, vv. 13-15

- A. This excellent woman is productive for her household.
1. This woman works with raw material to make clothes.
 - a. She works with wool and flax.
 - b. Producing cloth from wool and flax requires long hours of labor.
 - c. From this material she provides clothes for her household.
 - d. Her work is her delight or she enjoys her work.
 2. She is a shopper.
 - a. She is like a merchant ship bringing in her goods.
 - b. We may say, "Her shopping cart is as big as a semi-truck."
 - c. Applic. - Men do not shop they select, bag and pay. We do not shop, we hunt. My sights are on it, I have it, and here I come checkout. Women take more time.
 3. She arises in the night to provide for her family and to give instructions to her helpers.
 - a. Illus. - A single mother came home after a tiring day on her job. Her apartment was in the noisy section of town where sirens wailed, cars passed by, and other noises. This mother slept through all these noises until her little baby cried. She awoke immediately. She rises in the night to help her family.
 - b. This woman gave instructions to her helpers because she was the queen mother with helpers.
 - c. When you first read this Scripture you may be annoyed by all the details of another culture. But women are detailed. This Scripture shows a woman's touch.

B. Assist in service.

III. L - LEARN TO MANAGE FINANCES, Vv. 16-18

- A. She manages finances well.
1. She buys some land and plants a vineyard.

2. She performs quality work.
 - a. Her trading is profitable.
 - b. Her lamp does not go out.
 - 1). She is known to work late at night to finish her work.
 - 2). She plans ahead for her lamp to have fuel.
 3. Applic. – This woman is a good planner. She plans ahead in order to spend their money wisely.
 4. Ex. - Families need skills and discipline in managing their money. Many proverbs deal with money. Prov. 15:16 – Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil.
- B. This text shows the financial skills of ancient women.
1. This excellent wife was a business woman and a manager.
 2. The Bible has always elevated the role of women in our world.
 3. In the New Testament, Acts, the first European convert was a woman named Lydia, who sold an expensive cloth.
 4. Every woman needs financial skills because much of the money in our world is spent by women.
- C. Applic. - If we do not manage our money, it will manage us. The rising price of gasoline, groceries, and other items requires all of us to be wiser in our management of our financial resources.
- D. L is for Learn to manage our finances.

IV. U - USE YOUR HANDS TO BE CHARITABLE, Vv. 19-21

- A. She makes provisions for her family.
1. The distaff and the spindle refer to the ancient form of weaving.
 2. She provides for her family.
 3. During the bad winters she has no fear for her family.
 4. Illus. - A teacher gave her class of second graders a lesson on the magnet and what it does. The next day in a written test, she included this question: "My full name has six letters. The first letter is M. I pick up things. What am I?" When the test papers were turned in, almost 50 percent of the students answered the question with the word Mother.
- B. She makes provisions for the poor.
1. She stretches out her hand to the poor and the needy.

2. King Lemuel, the writer, presents this woman as wealthy.
 - a). She gives to those who are poor.
 - b). Ex. - Curt Gallmeyer said in a Fit Club meeting last Sunday night we Americans spend \$400 billion a year eating out. That amount would alleviate world hunger. As a church we have a benevolence ministry and we help our church families when difficult times hit.
 - c). Use your hands to help others.

V. A - ATTAIN THE BEST, Vv. 22-24

- A. She handles prosperity well.
 1. She makes coverings for her bed and is clothed with linen and purple.
 2. She adds to the respect her husband enjoys.
 3. She provides quality material to others.

- B. Illus. - No one deserves a special day all to herself more than today's Mom. A cartoon showed a psychologist talking to his patient: "Let's see," he said, "You spend 50 percent of your energy on your job, 50 percent on your husband and 50 percent on your children. I think I see your problem." Source Unknown.

- C. Her husband is known in the gates of the city when he sits with the elders of the land.
 1. Her husband's career was similar to a councilman or a commissioner in our community.
 2. She was a silent partner in his career.
 3. She is known for her quality of character and workmanship.
 4. Illus. - One of our neighbors bordering our farm when I grew up was a farmer and a carpenter. He was an excellent builder. Every piece of wood he put into a house, he signed his name on it. Some of the older houses in that county have now been renovated. When workers find his name on a board, they admire his work.

- D. A is for ATTAIN the best.

VI. B - BE WISE IN SPEECH, vv. 25-27

- A. She is clothed with strength and dignity.

1. She has strength and beauty.
2. Women can have strength but no beauty or beauty but no strength.
3. Her character is seen in her work.
4. She laughs at the future.

B. She speaks with wisdom.

1. She makes sense and is reliable.
2. Illus. - She speaks with kindness. Someone once asked my wife if she woke up grouchy. She answered, "No, I just let him sleep."
3. Ex. – Martha Peace wrote the book we men and women have been studying on Wednesday evenings. In *The Excellent Wife* she writes, "My parents loved and indulged me as an only child. Imagine my shock at age 19 when my high school sweetheart and I married and I discovered that the world did not revolve around me after all! . . . I wrongly thought that getting married and having children would make me happy. It did pacify me for a while, but soon I was looking for something more. I could not be satisfied. . . I pursued an advanced degree in the field of nursing and eventually taught nursing at a local school. I really did enjoy teaching nursing, but all my efforts were centered on pleasing myself and pursuing my career. Soon, my marriage began to break down. I had become a full blown feminist who was going to make my mark on the world – my way. . . My life has changed dramatically because of what I have learned over the years about being a godly wife. . . Even though I fail miserably sometimes, God is in the process of molding me. . . God has not only given me a deep love for my husband, but also a passion for His Word and for teaching younger women to be the excellent wife described in Scripture."

(The Excellent Wife by Martha Peace, pp. 1, 2, 3)

C. She watches over the ways of her household.

1. She is a guard over her house.
2. She guards against bad influences.
3. She is never idle with her household.

D. Quote - If we want to change our nation, begin by enlisting the mothers. Winston Churchill

VII. L - LAUGH AT THE FUTURE, vv. 28-31

- A. The last portion of this acrostic is a summary of her life.
1. King Lemuel's mother has died now.
 2. Death clears up our vision of our family members.
 3. He probably endured a time when he thought she was tough and mean.
- B. Her children rise up and bless her.
1. Success is when your children admire and appreciate you.
 2. Illus. – Tina Torry from Greenville, South Carolina, told how at the age of seventeen she became pregnant. All her friends and family advised her to have an abortion. A friend named Kathy agreed to go with her to an abortion clinic. Finally the procedure was completed. She paid her \$150 and left the clinic with her friend. She began to have persistent pain leading her to visit a gynecologist. She presented the receipt of her visit to the abortionist. The gynecologist gave her a pregnancy test, which Tina thought was ridiculous. She tested positive. But she had just had an abortion! She was still pregnant. The doctor announced that the baby may be born with a number of birth defects. In the meantime she encountered a Bible believing church in New Jersey which she was converted to Christ. Heidi was born in her seventh month and was a healthy baby. This child has spent many years traveling with her mother telling how she was an abortion victim. Heidi is now married with two children. Their story has saved many children from death and prevented many mothers from severe grief. Tina and her daughter, Heidi, remind us God's grace works with us where we are to lead us where God wants us to be.
 3. *No man is poor who has had a godly mother.*
 4. Illus. - The mother of three notoriously unruly youngsters was asked whether or not she'd have children if she had it to do over again. "Yes," she replied. "But not the same ones." David Finkelstein, Reader's Digest.
- C. Her husband rises up and praises her.
1. Many have done nobly but you excel them all.
 2. Illus. – A reporter asked Billy Graham asked about the person he admired the most. Graham said he would be glad to name the person he admired the most. After meeting many famous and outstanding people in his life, Graham said, "The most outstanding person I have ever met is my wife."

3. Applic. – My wife is my best friend and I admire her above all other people I know.

VIII. E - ENJOY YOUR LEGACY, Vv. 30-31

A. In the present

1. Motherhood starts with the total dependency of a child and admiration.
2. As adolescence starts mothers lose some of their charm.
3. As her children grow and mature, mom gets smarter.
4. As a mother your present legacy may not be completed.

B. After earthly life ends

1. Charm is her physical shape.
2. Beauty is appearance.
3. Both are good but they can be deceptive and vain.
4. This woman fears the Lord.
 - a. All biblical characters are tiny windows to see a part of God.
 - b. Her respect for God is the core of her being.
 - c. She is worthy of being praised.
5. All Godly women want us to see God through them.

CONCLUSION – Video "Dear Mom"