

# THE STEWARD

## PRIORITIZING RELATIONSHIPS & BALANCING RESPONSIBILITIES

“Sorry honey, dinner won’t be ready for at least an hour. They were showing back-to-back reruns of my favorite show.” It wouldn’t have been an issue except this morning he couldn’t find a single pair of clean pants. “I decided to stay out with my friends a little longer than I normally do,” she explained. He had no choice but to retrieve yesterday’s pair from the bottom of the hamper.

It was becoming increasingly clear that he didn’t top her list of priorities. Soon after she set out to make dinner, the phone rang—a pressing, and necessary call she assured him. Frustrated, he walked into the kitchen, took the spoon from her hand, and began to make dinner himself.

In biblical times, the husband was responsible for the well-being of his family. His role was to work outside of the home, bringing in income for food, clothing, and shelter. Undoubtedly, his diligence decided the fate of his family.

Similarly, “a woman’s performance of her tasks determined the failure or success of the family.”<sup>1</sup> As his helpmeet, she was to assist her husband in the management of the home. If she failed, the family suffered, leaving her husband to bear the domestic responsibilities in addition to his labors. However, if she worked hard at the tasks laid before her, her husband and her family were greatly benefited. Her diligence enabled him to feel confident and secure for their future. Proverbs 19:14 says, “*A prudent wife is from the Lord*” (NKJV).

Do you believe this to be true in our day and age? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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How do you measure failure or success within a marriage, and within a family? \_\_\_\_\_

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With your marriage in mind, read 1 Corinthians 12:14-26.

Proverbs 24:30-34 says, “*I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man*” (NIV).

### Dependence

As a wife, mother, and entrepreneur, the woman of Proverbs 31 is noted for her wisdom, character, strength, and ability. For generations, Christian wives have aspired to be like her: praised for their many works and admired for their selflessness. Although the fruit of her hands warrant her honor and praise (31:28-31), it is not her accomplishments that have earned her the title “Virtuous Wife,” but rather, her fear of the Lord. Compelled by her love and reverence for Him, the Proverbs 31 woman diligently carries out the tasks her Lord has entrusted into her care.

Read about the virtuous wife in Proverbs 31:10-31, and then answer the following questions:

WOMAN: THE GLORY OF MAN  
SHINING IN THE MIDST OF YOUR MARRIAGE

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What, specifically, has been entrusted into her care? \_\_\_\_\_

Identify all those who praise her as a result of her diligence. Note their responses and/or feelings towards her. \_\_\_\_\_

What does this tell you about her relationship with her husband? \_\_\_\_\_

What has been entrusted into your care as a wife? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you believe your relationship with your husband is subsequently affected when you fail to carry out your responsibilities within the marriage? How? \_\_\_\_\_

According to Titus 2:4-5, what are a woman's primary responsibilities within a marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

As a wife, are you accountable to the Lord for the care of your husband, the care of your children, and the care of your household? Why, or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

As wives, we have indeed been entrusted with a great responsibility—a stewardship if you will. The virtuous wife certainly viewed her role as such. And as a result “*the heart of her husband safely trusts her,*” “*her children rise up and call her blessed, [and] her husband also praises her*” (Proverbs 31:11, 28, NKJV).

Before we move on, I want you to consider whether your husband and children praise you in this manner? Does this type of response seem far-fetched? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

Being a wife and a mother is often a thankless job. But, in some cases, these women do not receive praises from the ones they serve simply because their attitudes reflect duties done grudgingly, out of necessity, rather than tasks done out of love.

Look back over the description of the Proverbs 31 woman. What seems to be her attitude towards the tasks she performs? \_\_\_\_\_

How does your attitude differ from hers? \_\_\_\_\_

Read Philippians 2:14 and Psalm 100:2.

Galatians 6:9-10 says, “*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith*” (NKJV).

## Trusted

Reread Proverbs 31:11-12. The Hebrew word for “trusts” in Proverbs 31:11 is *batab*. *Batab* “expresses the feeling of safety and security that is felt when one can rely on someone.”<sup>2</sup> Just as the verse says, her husband trusts her; he can rely on her. Trust is defined as “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, and truth of someone.”<sup>3</sup>

Trust is further defined as “a charge or duty imposed in faith or confidence as a condition of some relationship,” and “something committed to or entrusted to one to be used or cared for in the interest of another.”<sup>4</sup>

This means that the virtuous wife’s husband trusts her to make wise and prudent decisions; acting only with *his* best interests in mind. He can be assured that his family will suffer no loss as a result of her stewardship. She is faithful in her management of their property, their finances, and all other household affairs.

Would you say your husband has full confidence in your management of all domestic affairs? Why, or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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Record 1 Corinthians 4:2. \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Matthew 8:5-13, focusing on verse 9.

With this verse in mind, what does it mean to be a faithful steward? (Also read Proverbs 6:6-8, 14:1, and 31:17.) \_\_\_\_\_

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Proverbs 31:12 continues, “*She does him good not evil all the days of her life*” (NKJV).

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:10 and 1 Timothy 5:8 from the feminine perspective. What is said of a man who will not work? Can a wife neglect her responsibilities simply because she is a woman? Why, or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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Titus 2:5 closed with these words: “*so the word of God may not be blasphemed*” (NKJV). What connection do you see between this verse and the preceding verses? \_\_\_\_\_

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Turn now to Matthew 25:14-30. As you read, consider the stewardship the Lord has entrusted to you, first, as a wife, second, as a mother, and last, as an entrepreneur. Will you be faithful, or unfaithful with what you have been given? Will you put your talents to work for your Lord? If so, how? \_\_\_\_\_

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First Peter 4:10 says, “*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God*” (NKJV).

What resulted because of their faithful service (vv. 21, 23)? \_\_\_\_\_

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*“Well done, good and faithful servant.” “Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all”* (Matthew 25:21 and Proverbs 31:29, NKJV). The faithful servants and the virtuous wife were given opportunity to serve their Master. With fear and reverence, they carried out the tasks they had been given to the best of their ability.

In conclusion, it is important to understand that it was *not* the virtuous wife’s abilities that made her a successful wife, mother, and entrepreneur. Her success can only be attributed to the Lord. As was previously stated, she feared and revered Him. She seemed to understand that she was *“His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that [she] should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10, NKJV). Her ministry, both in and outside of the home, was a reflection of the time she spent in His presence. She first sought the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33), and then, wisely prioritized her relationships, and balanced her responsibilities.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might”* (NKJV).

In closing, review Colossians 3:17-18, 22-24.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Husbands and wives have distinctly different roles within marriage. Both husband and wife must do their part to maintain unity and functionality in the home. How are a husband’s and wife’s tasks different, but equally important?
2. To have confidence in another, you must have the “faith or belief that [they] will act in a right, proper, or effective way.” Confidence is also “reliance on another’s discretion.”<sup>5</sup> Have you given your spouse any reason to doubt, or to feel uncertain about your skills as a wife, as a mother, or as an entrepreneur? If so, what changes can you make to assure him of your trustworthiness?
3. Do you ever find yourself justifying a lack of diligence? What excuses do you tend to use?
4. With this in mind, read Galatians 6:3-10. In what ways have you sown to your flesh? How have your actions brought stress and discord into your home?
5. When feeling weary in doing good for your family, where do you turn for renewal? Do you seek worldly pleasures, or do you turn to the Lord?
6. Read Luke 10:38-42. When you fail to spend time in the Lord’s presence is your attitude adversely affected? Does it resemble that of Martha’s? If so, explain.

How can you nourish your personal relationship with the Lord while remaining a successful steward?

7. Oftentimes, the Proverbs 31 woman is noted for what she accomplished, rather than for who she was. But as you examine her deeds, you will discover that she was a woman of virtue:

trustworthy, industrious, generous, selfless, and loving. How do your tasks attest to your character?

Read James 2:17-18.

8. Read Titus 2:1-10. In which areas do you excel? Which areas tend to be a struggle?
9. With each decision the virtuous wife made, her husband was assured of her priorities: first, to bring honor to the Lord, and secondly, to honor him. What are your priorities? How do your actions confirm your priorities?
10. Being a godly wife begins with the right priorities—nourishing your personal relationship with the Lord, ministering to your husband, nurturing your children, keeping your home, and then adding to your schedule whatever other activities time and energy permit.<sup>6</sup> Identify anything that may be competing for your attention. What steps are you willing to take to put your priorities in this order?

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<sup>1</sup> Packer, J.I.; Tenney, Merrill Chapin; White, William: *Nelson's Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995.

<sup>2</sup> Baker, Warren and Eugene Carpenter. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 2003. H982.

<sup>3</sup> Merriam-Webster, Inc: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Eleventh ed. Springfield, Mass. : Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas, Nelson, I. (1997, c1995). *Women's Study Bible*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson.