

The Perfect Wife

Have you ever wanted to be so good something that you tried to read everything that was written about it so that you could learn as much as possible?

That was me the year that I got married to my husband Joe. I wanted so badly to be a good wife, the best wife I could ever possibly be, that I read every book I could find. I was hoping to find a to do list that said do these things and you'll be the perfect wife.

I read a book that said since I dressed up and wore makeup when I was dating my husband then I should continue to do that now that I was married to him because that was the person he fell in love with.

My first thought there was I'm really glad he got used to seeing me in sweatpants and scrubs without makeup because that was the person I was, a kind of a what you see is what you get girl.

I read a book that said I was sinning and enabling my husband to sin because I was working full time while he was going to school full time to get his master's degree. According to that book the man was supposed to work and the woman was to take care of the house.

I read so many books the I became angry, frustrated and confused with trying to be a perfect wife - so much so - that I actually lost my joy in just loving my husband.

It was at this point that I was introduced to the Proverbs 31 Wife. The **Wife of Noble Character**.

Now to be honest, I was prepared to completely dislike this wife who was described so positively. I mean, how could anyone be so perfect. Able to do it all - the cooking, laundry, vacuuming, toilet bowl cleaning, child raising, a job. I envisioned a to do list for the perfect wife that was going to be impossible to attain.

Now here is where I put in a disclaimer. I want to point out that this passage is actually a poem about the "perfect" wife, but since the wife written about in this poem doesn't ever seem to sleep, I think we can assume that it is not realistic to try to do all the things that she is said to do. There are only 24 hours in a day and we need to sleep for some of them. That being said, I do not believe that this passage is a to do list for

the “perfect” wife. I believe that this passage is a list of attributes that form one’s character- **A Wife of Noble Character** - and I believe that we should strive to develop these character traits not just as wives, but as women (and men) who love God. So what are these character traits?

A Woman of Noble Character (vs 10)

The word used here can also be translated as strong. What do you think of when you think of the word strong? Do you think of Superman leaping tall buildings and stopping trains, or maybe the Strongman at a circus lifting heavy weights? I know that I often think of the English word strong in terms of physical strength so I looked it up in my dictionary app the Oxford Dictionary and here are three other possible definitions of the English word strong:

1) exerting great force

This does not necessarily have to be a physical force. It could be an emotional or psychological force. Right now my nerdy mind is seeing Yoda from the movie Star Wars. For those of you who may have never seen or heard of this movie, it is a movie about a force that can be manipulated by a certain group of people called the Jedi. This force can be light or dark. Which represents good and evil in the movie. Yoda is a master Jedi and a trainer of other Jedi. In one scene the audience sees Yoda moving a student's spaceship out of a swamp using only his mind to control the force. A powerful imagery when you consider what kind of force your emotions can have on yourself or others around you. Ever heard the saying: “the tension in the room was so thick you could cut it with a knife”? Another scene in the movie has Yoda warning his student: “But beware the dark side. Anger, fear, aggression; the dark side of the Force are they. Easily they flow, quick to join you in a fight.” What great force do you exert each day of your life? Light or dark?

2) able to withstand great force or pressure

This one is definitely for all of the mothers out there, because I know that I can’t resist the cute smiling faces of your children, but you have to say no to them on a regular basis. Talk about withstanding pressure. How about the pressure you may feel to be a “good Mom” feeding your kids, driving them to activities

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all while trying to keep up with the laundry, the vacuuming, the grocery shopping. What about the pressure to make the “right” decision about home schooling vs public school vs private school.

What about the other pressures that are part of the battle of life that we face everyday? Pressure from family, friends, co-workers, the media or society to conform to someone else’s view of what is success, what is right and wrong. Are you able to stand on God’s word and stay strong?

3) not easily disturbed, upset or affected

Ouch! I know I have trouble in this area. Let me get overtired or stressed and it is amazing how upset I can get at the small stuff. I have an iWatch and it has this app on it called Breathe that is designed to remind a person to take time throughout the day to stop for a minute and take deep breaths. It’s a great idea for all of us to remember to do this once in a while throughout our day. Deep breathing is a mindful practice that provides numerous health benefits beyond the standard respiration required to live. It can help with stress reduction to a slower heartbeat and reduced blood pressure. Funny thing about my app, it always seems to send me a reminder to pause and breath when I am most upset. Coincidence? Or maybe my Father in heaven giving me a gentle reminder. What about you? Have you taken a deep breath lately?

It’s not all about how much physical strength you have. It’s about having a strength of character.

A Woman Who is Loving and Helpful (vs 12, 18 and 20)

Verse 12 says that “She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.”

What does this look like to you? To bring your husband good and not harm. Let’s think of things that might be harmful, like complaining about your husband to others, putting him down instead of building him up. Think back on the last conversation that you had with a friend where the topic of husbands came up. What came out of your mouth during that conversation? Was it positive? Was it negative?

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Mathew 15:18 says "... the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart,..."

If negative things are coming out of your mouth what does that say about your heart for your husband?

Be an encourager! Be your husbands number one fan! Build him up!

Verse 18 says that her "lamp does not go out at night"

What does a lamp that is lit at night do? It shines light into darkness! Shine your light into the darkness around you. Shine the love of Christ into your husband, your children, your friends and especially strangers. By shining kindness and love into peoples lives you not only "bring good" you point to the one who can bring "the best" into someone's life. You point to Jesus - The Light.

verse 20 says that "She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy."

Who are the poor and needy in your life? Do you see them and help or do you put on blinders and walk by on the other side of the road?

A Woman Who is Hard Working (verses 13-19, 22, 24 and 27)

Wow! When we look at these verses we see what a hard worker this wife is. Unlike the book I read that said a woman working outside the home was sinning, this "noble wife" buys and sells, earns money, plants a vineyard, provides food, and plans for winter. She is not idle. She is a manager. She manages her household and works eagerly at all she does but notice that she does not DO IT ALL ALONE. The wife portrayed here has servants to help with the day to day work of the house. Now most if us do not have servants to help us out, but we have our husbands and our friends and our Christian family and it is ok to ask for help when you need it. I, also, want to be clear that this passage is not saying that a wife has to have a job or a career. The character trait here is that of doing your best at whatever you work at whether that is raising a family, maintaining your house or working at a job outside the home.

A Woman Who Shows Strength and dignity (vs 25)

Verse 25 says that "She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come."

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What do you think of when you get dressed each day? If you're like me you probably think about what you are doing for the day and pick out the appropriate type of clothing. You wonder if your clothes match, if your jewelry goes with your outfit. What would it look like if you took time to clothe yourself with strength and dignity. Would you spend more time in God's word? More time in prayer? The best way to find strength everyday is to look to the One who is your strength. The foundation that you stand on, the one who will always be there for you, is Jesus. He is where we find the strength to:

be able to withstand great force or pressure

be not easily disturbed, upset or affected

It is because God is in control that we can "laugh at the days to come" without fear of what the future will bring.

A Woman Who is Wise and Kind (vs 26)

Verse 26 says that "She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue."

The NIV version says faithful instruction - the NASB and ESV versions say "the teaching of kindness".

The book of Proverbs is all about God's wisdom for living life everyday. What are you teaching the younger generation by your words and actions. Are you teaching them God's wisdom of how to live life well? Are you teaching love and kindness through your words and actions? What about the cost of sin and the forgiveness offered by Jesus?

Fears the Lord (vs 30)

Verse 30 says that "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." So what does it mean to "Fear the Lord"

It means a reverential awe of God:

Psalms 33:8

Let all the earth fear the Lord;

let all the people of the world revere him.

It means to hate evil:

Proverbs 8:13

To fear the Lord is to hate evil;

I hate pride and arrogance,

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evil behavior and perverse speech.

It means to gain wisdom and understanding:

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

It means to obey Him and be blessed by Him

Psalms 128:1

Blessed are all who fear the Lord,
who walk in obedience to him.

It means to be given life

Proverbs 14:27

The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life,
turning a person from the snares of death.

In order for us as women to have a fear of the Lord, to hate evil, to gain wisdom, to obey and be blessed, and to be given life we must have a relationship with God. We must always be seeking to be with God, to talk with God, to know Him better and to be known by Him.

So now we come to the end of the character traits that we want to strive for as women of God. While this may be a challenging list of character traits to consider, there is great reward listed in this scripture passage as well. There are virtues that come from having these character traits.

OK guys, I've been speaking mostly to the women, but now I want to take a moment to speak to you as we look at this last list of verses - these "rewards" -and I want you to think about your wife. Look at her - Your Proverbs 31 wife.

She is Priceless (vs 10-11)

According to verse 10 she is "worth more than rubies". I did a little online research and found a website called The International Gem Society. According to them "fine-quality rubies are some of the most expensive gemstones, with record prices over **\$1,000,000 per carat**. Large, gem-quality rubies can be more valuable than comparably sized diamonds and are certainly rarer." No wonder this wife of noble character is hard to find - she is very rare. I bet that makes you think a little differently about your wife. God is telling you that she is priceless.

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According to verse 11, with her in your life you “lack nothing of value”. What in your life do you consider valuable? Your job, your house, your car? It is not worth what your wife is worth.

She is Trustworthy (vs 11)

Verse 11 also says that “Her husband has full confidence in her”

Confidence is defined as:

The feeling or belief that one can rely on someone or something;
firm trust

Do you trust your wife? Do you let her know that you have confidence in her or do you question everything she does? Do you let others know that you have confidence in your wife?

She is Praiseworthy (vs 28)

Verse 28 says that “Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:”

To praise someone is to express approval or admiration of that person. Do praise your wife? What do you say about her to your friends or your co-workers? Is she your “ball and chain” or is she your valuable ruby?

She Should Be Honored (vs 31)

Verse 31 says “Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.”

I find the word honor to be very interesting. It is not the same thing as praise. It is defined as:

high respect; great esteem;
a person or thing that brings credit;
something regarded as a rare opportunity
bringing pride and pleasure

Wow! Do you respect your wife? Do you regard your marriage to her as a rare opportunity, a privilege? Remember she is worth more than rubies.

Ladies, do you feel as I do, that to be trusted, praised and honored by your husband is an amazing and valuable reward? A precious gift? Something worth striving for?

So what happened to that to do list I was looking for? The one that told me how to be a “perfect wife”?

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It doesn't exist. The "perfect wife" doesn't exist either.

Marriage is a relationship between two people. Just as no two people are the same - No two relationships are the same. Relationships are as different as the sinful, broken people who are in them.

While the various aspects that make up a relationship are the same - conversation, doing things together, loving each other, the tasks of day to day living - how each aspect plays out in your life and marriage will look different than in mine. There is no list of who is to do the laundry or clean the toilet - that is a decision for you and your husband to make within your relationship.

Marriage is also a reflection of the relationship that God has with us. A relationship of unconditional love, sacrifice and forgiveness. God loves us so much that He sacrificed His son. Jesus loves us so much that He sacrificed His life. All so that we as sinful, broken humans can experience forgiveness in order to have the ultimate relationship - a relationship with God. How? By believing in Jesus Christ. Have faith in Jesus and accept His gift of love and forgiveness and you will become His bride and receive the ultimate reward of a new life where your mistakes, imperfections and sins - both past, present and future - are forgiven.

While I still strive to achieve the character traits of **A Noble Wife**, I find it very comforting to know that I do not have to be "perfect". I am forgiven of my sins and loved by God just the way I am and I'm grateful that God's grace, which provides me with forgiveness, is also working to grow me in Christ likeness. It is through this growth that I believe I am becoming the person that God wants me to be, and just maybe that person is the "perfect" wife for Joe.

You should probably ask my husband that question though.

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Questions for reflection

- 1) What kind of force do you find yourself exerting throughout your day?
What does this say about your heart?
Proverbs 4:23 Above all else guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.
- 2) When the forces and pressures that are part of your everyday “battle of life” come at you, what is your response?
- 3) What strategies do you use to be “not easily disturbed, upset or affected”?
- 4) What does “fear of the Lord” look like in your life?
- 5) How do you show unconditional love, sacrifice and forgiveness to your loved ones?
- 6) God does not require “perfection” for forgiveness to happen. What does this mean to you?