

## Introduction

The general form of Proverbs is poetic. But these verses, which are the last 22 verses of the book, are in a special form called an acrostic. That is, the first verse begins with the Hebrew Aleph (א) and the second with Bet (ב), and so on, all the way to the twenty-second and final letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Tav (ט). Of course, this is difficult to reproduce in English translation, but knowing it can indeed help us appreciate not only the inspired quality of the text but also its artistic beauty.

“This literary form may have been intended as an aid to memory, but more likely it was a poetic way of saying that a total coverage of the subject was being offered -- as we would say, “from A to Z.” (J.A. Motyer, “Acrostic,” in *The New International Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p. 12.).

## Value of a Virtuous Woman – Infinite (v. 10)

The point of the question is that it is hard to find such a woman, relative to all that are out there. She is priceless!

Virtuous here means excellent in every way. The following verses define this virtue or excellence with concrete examples. If you want to experientially know virtue, follow the example!

### 1. Virtue in Relation to Her Husband (v. 11-12, 23)

a. Trustworthy. The point of this verse is not just that she is trustworthy, but that her husband will not be ruined. He will not lack anything, as would be the case if she wasted or ruined it.

b. A consistent doer of good. She does good, but not just sometimes. It is a lifelong commitment and practice.

c. The kind of woman who is virtuous helps to “make” a respected man. She provides the home where he can excel in *his* responsibilities if she excels in *hers*.

### 2. Virtue in Relation to Provision for Her Household (v. 13-15, 19, 21-22)

a. Clothing (v. 13, 19, 21, 22). These verses, which not immediately adjacent to each other, seems to indicate a progression: she obtains the raw materials she needs for the job (v. 13), then forms the fabric she needs (v. 19), then makes the clothing for her household (v. 21), and finally makes her own clothing (v. 22). In fact, v. 24 tells us that she makes more than enough for the family and sells the extra to the merchants.

b. Food (v. 14-15). Here again, the virtuous wife collects food from wherever it is necessary (v. 14) and gets up early to provide food for her family and servants (v. 15).

### 3. Virtue in Relation to Things/People Outside the Home (v. 16, 20, 24)

a. Buying a field. This work results in profit which can be used for further work in the home.

b. Selling merchandise (fine linen and sashes). What she makes that is not need for the family she puts out into the market and makes some money from it.

c. Being kind to the poor. The previous two items are done for the improvement of her household (v. 15, 21, 27) and for the poor (v. 20) who benefit from

her kindness and diligence. She *aspires* to help them and she is *able* to do so. So often we lack one or both of these things.

### 4. Virtue in Relation to Inner Character (v. 17-18, 25, 26, 27)

a. Hard-working (v. 17-18). She works hard so that she becomes strong. She also works long hours, i.e. burns the midnight oil. Note verse 15 also says she arises while it is still night!

b. She is characterized by strength and honor (v. 25). The metaphor of “clothing” here indicates character, which is so prevalent inside that it works out to become her outer garment.

c. Wise (v. 26). This manifests itself particularly in her speech. Wives and mothers can provide godly counsel.

d. Kind (v. 26b). This also comes out in her speech. Her speech is “ruled” by kindness (as indicated in the word “law”).

e. Industrious (v. 27). She is not idle. She does not waste time. This again is done for “her household.” That is, she is not busy for busy sake, but for a more ultimate and important goal. This industriousness is a manifestation of godly character, for laziness is condemned by God in the Scriptures (Prov. 6:6, 6:9, 10:26, 13:4, 20:4, 26:16, 19:15).

### 5. Virtue Rewarded and Summarized (v. 28-31)

The praise of the excellent wife comes from multiple directions. Here they are:

a. From children (v. 28a). “Blessed” is all the epitome of what is good and happy and godly.

b. From husband (v. 28b-29). Her husband can praise her. I take it that verse 29 is the content of his praise, as if quotation marks were around it. The switch to the second person “you” indicates that the husband is quoted here as speaking to his lovely wife.

c. From God (v. 30). Outer beauty is not what makes a woman virtuous. It is the inner fear of God which forms the foundation for all of these other qualities. She will receive the praise. In other words, the sum of all that has been said is that it is tough to find (v. 10) a **godly** woman (v. 30)!

d. From her own works (v. 31). The virtuous wife is humble. She doesn’t need to tell others how good she is—it is plainly obvious for all to see themselves. This is indicated also by the sometimes menial labor that she performs (v. 13).

## Conclusion

What a complete picture is herein given. So many compartments of life are addressed. It will reward in the long run to pay close attention to it!

By the way, a word of encouragement to you ladies. It might be tempting to think that such a standard is impossible to reach. And that is just what that thought is—a *temptation*. Under God and with His help, you can move in the direction of this kind of woman. Let me give you another example: as Christians, we are all to be conformed to the image of Christ. What a high and holy standard. However, difficulty does not exempt us from duty! With God, all things are possible (Matt. 19:26)!