

Proverbs 31 Woman at Work

Presented by Lauren Stibgen

Air Dates: April 29 – May 3, 2024

Day One

Many of us have read about the Proverbs 31 woman. Proverbs 31 verses 10-31 describe a woman who is to be praised for her godly character. In today's reality, she embodies what many of us as Christian working women are: wives, mothers, and business leaders! Looking at this example in Proverbs 31, we consider some of the attributes that can impact our leadership.

A wife of noble character, who can find? (Proverbs 31:10)

Maybe when you hear the word noble your mind goes directly to a king or queen. However, another definition of noble is having or showing fine personal qualities or high moral principles and ideals.

One can argue having high moral principles and ideals is one of the most important attributes of a leader. While most companies have a code of conduct, it is your behavior in the office or how you show up that matters.

As a Christian, our moral principles and ideals are shaped by God's Word in the Bible. At the highest level in John 15:12 we are called to love one another as Jesus has loved us. Being noble means showing our shareholders, colleagues, subordinates, customers, and even suppliers an attitude that exudes Christ's love. Often, we see this referred to as servant leadership.

Think of Jesus washing his disciples' feet. This seems less than noble. Feet today are smelly, but back in Jesus' time, people walked around in hot weather, in dust and dirt. It was a servant's job to wash feet.

We don't need to wash feet at work, but there are simple ways to show love. Perhaps it is acknowledging a birthday or work anniversary. Maybe you celebrate your team's success by acknowledging a job well done. Is a member of your team experiencing a trial with health or family? How can you support them?

Let's think of another definition of noble for a moment: belonging to a hereditary class with high social or political status. I think we have all met this leader who feels anointed to their position. Someone who has an air about them who feels above people. They don't make time or reach down to help their team. Maybe it is hard to approach them.

Focusing on high moral standards and ideals, I challenge you to read more about how Jesus served others and to look further into how the woman of noble character served others as well.

Day Two

How do you start your day? And how do you solve problems that arise? Part of being a good leader is how you prepare and resource yourself. Considering Proverbs 31, what do we learn about being prepared?

Two verses from Proverbs 31 stand out to me.

She gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family and portions for her female servants (Proverbs 31:15).

Sometimes the days seem long, and I know not everyone will wake up early to start their day. However, being a prepared leader will not only help you but will show love and respect also. Planning and being prepared can impact the elusive work/life balance so many people are seeking. As a leader, taking a few minutes in the morning to plan for your day is essential.

Thinking more about providing food for her family and portions for her female servants, we can consider how those who work for us are in our care, just like our family. Whether it is a well-planned meeting or even planning to reach out to team members for a quick check in, a plan helps in their feeding.

The next verse in Proverbs 31 also helps us consider our preparedness.

When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet (Proverbs 31:21).

How is your team clothed? Let's think of some examples of what this looks like at work. The pandemic gave us a look at how clothed teams were in their ability to work from anywhere. Some companies shined with their technology and others struggled to get this up and running.

As a leader, how are you clothing your team to be ready if you take time away on vacation? Are work plans communicated with clarity, and are plans in place for someone to cover?

What if one of your key team members suddenly leaves the organization? How is the team clothed to have access to important information like emails or files that will help with workflow?

Taking special care in clothing someone to be prepared for a promotion is another consideration as you lead. Leaders who can help promote or grow other leaders are truly helping prepare their organizations, their subordinates, and themselves for what is next!

Maybe you are listening to these examples and thinking you have a little fear for your work household! Wake up early and start making a list of how you can best prepare to clothe your team today and for future growth!

Day Three

She is clothed with strength and dignity; and can laugh at the days to come (Proverbs 31:25).

As a leader, being clothed can take on aspects of both physical presence and personality presence.

Consider the two defining words: strength and dignity.

How do you show strength in both your physical presence and in your personality as a leader? First let's think of our physical strength. You have heard the phrase you can't pour from an empty cup! As a leader, taking care of your physical strength through minding your health is important. Are you getting enough sleep to endure through your day? Are you able to physically move your body and nourish yourself with healthy foods? All these daily habits of health will increase your physical strength.

Now, what about showing strength in personality? Balancing strength with humility as a Christian is critical to showing love to others. Having a strong personality can take on negative connotations, but

what if you think about leading with strength? One way you might show strength with a humble approach is by highlighting the work your subordinates complete. Perhaps you speak up during a meeting with an opinion that is contrary to the remainder of your leadership team in a respectful manner, or maybe you propose a new way to implement faith employee resource groups in your workplace.

Now we shift to dignity in both your physical presence and in your personality as a leader.

Dignity is defined as the state or quality of being worthy of honor and respect.

I know this may sound silly but how you physically show up matters. Are you dressed professionally? This can take many forms depending on your environment, but dressing your best and being clothed in a dignified way matters. My mom always told me to dress for the job I want, not the one I have!

What about having a dignified personality? Part of being worthy of honor and respect is showing honor and respect. Reflecting dignity to others is another way to show Christ's love to others at work.

Dignity is a basic human need; it's our sense of self-worth, respect, and esteem. Preserving dignity in another person means respecting their whole self and caregiving in a way that respects their preferences and individuality.

Jesus showed dignity to others throughout the scriptures. From tax collectors to prostitutes, he should serve as our best example of how to approach each person where she is at. You may be the only example of Christ at work, and showing others dignity is key.

Now for the final piece of this verse that indicates she can laugh at the days to come. The Proverbs 31 woman doesn't fear the future because she leans on the Lord for wisdom.

Day Four

Wouldn't it be terrific to laugh at the days to come? While this verse from Proverbs 31 seems flippant at face value, at its core is a woman who seeks her wisdom from God and fears him first.

Being God fearing and wise are both attributes of leadership that help us further show love and faith at work. If we think of Colossians 3:23 where we are implored to work as to the Lord and not man, abiding in God's Word for us helps us develop a healthy fear and reverence naturally.

Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised
(Proverbs 31:30).

We talked about our physical presence and how we can clothe ourselves with strength and dignity, but the Word here is clear. We shouldn't solely rely on this. What does fear of the Lord look like?

Naturally, if we fear God we seek to behave in a manner that is pleasing to him. This could show up in leadership as honesty, being giving of your time, or even through excellence in the work you produce. It can also show up in how you resolve conflicts with others or in how you listen well to your team.

This reliance on God is not arrogant, especially since we know we cannot perfectly predict or control our future. God can.

Proverbs 1:7 tells us, *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*. The fruit of our Proverbs 31 woman's fear is seen in verse 26.

She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue (Proverbs 31:26).

Being a leader, you are in a position to provide instruction. Maybe this is as simple as on the job, technical training or providing deeper feedback to someone about specific development they need to progress to the next level of their career. In either instance we are called to be faithful. Being faithful with our words and being consistent in how we show up are all good fruits that help us love our teams well.

Day Five

She extends her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy (Proverbs 31:20).

We find a very clear instruction in Proverbs 31:20. Extending leadership influence beyond the office and being charitable with your time, treasure, and talent to those in need helps you provide a good example to your team of how Jesus loved others.

I have the pleasure of working with a very charitable organization that allows us to match our donations for an approved charity. This not only allows me to amplify my giving locally, but it allows my team to extend themselves as well. The amount isn't as important as the awareness the giving brings to common areas of interest and the ways all of us care for our community.

In addition to the charitable match, we also allow for two service days annually. We give our team members a day away to serve others in their community. What has been even better is that the team has also opted to support a charity together and serve as a team.

These are examples of both time and treasure, but how are you giving of your talent? 1 Peter 4:10 says *as each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another*. While there are many biblical gifts we could discuss, I would ask you think of something you are good at that could benefit someone in need. Are you a good cook? Maybe someone could use a home cooked meal. Do you enjoy connecting with people? Perhaps you could start a bible study or prayer meeting locally. Perhaps you are handy. Maybe you could lend a hand to someone who has a home that needs repair. Do you have executive skills like strategy and planning, finance, marketing, or technology? Maybe it is time you join a volunteer board for a non-profit that serves your community or a cause that is important to you.

I see women leading with open hearts every day. From serving in children's ministries, to helping immigrants new to this country, working to solve human trafficking to foster care, and even literacy, these women take their talents to the next level. It isn't about the financial donations they give, but about the extension of their talent with God's love in their community and beyond.

Being a leader, you are also called to be charitable. How can you extend your arm to someone today?