

## Her Children Call Her Blessed • Proverbs 31:28

Drive into a SuperAmerica gas station and you will see SuperMom signs. The assumption is that SuperMom stops there in her super-car on her way home from her super-job to pick up super-snacks for her super-kids who are part of her super-family at her super-house. SuperMom is more than an Ashland Oil Company advertising gimmick. It is what many modern women aspire to—skillfully and successfully balancing career, marriage, motherhood and personal life. The challenge is great in any one of these areas but it is a super-challenge to do it all!

Nowhere is SuperMom better described than on the last page of the Old Testament book of Proverbs. Let's look at what it says in Proverbs 31. We learn in verse 12, "*She brings (her husband) good, not harm, all the days of her life.*" It sounds here like she never makes a mistake. A very nice quality for any man to have in a wife!

Verse 13, "*She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.*" She works hard.

In verse 14, "*She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.*" She does not shop at SuperAmerica after all. She visits all the specialty ships—meat from the butcher, bread from the baker, fresh vegetables from the market. And probably no preservatives!

Verse 15, "*She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls.*" SuperMom is an early riser, getting up before dawn to cook breakfast. She has servant girls, but that doesn't make her lazy. She even cooks breakfast for the servants. She is the sort of person who thoroughly cleans the house before the cleaning lady arrives!

In verse 16, "*She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.*" She has a real estate license. She knows about buying property, turning a profit and reinvesting and diversifying.

In verse 17, "*She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.*" This is

another reminder that she is a hard worker. And strong! Her arms look a little like a weightlifter (not because she goes to the health club but because she is a hard physical worker).

In verse 18, "*She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.*" She is starting to sound like a workaholic because she is up before dawn and does not put her light out all night.

In verse 19, "*In her hands she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.*" She is doing tasks that customarily would only have been done by men in her society. However, she has also kept up on and fulfilled well the traditional role of spinning and other chores that a woman normally would have done in that society.

"*She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy*" (verse 20). Not only does she succeed at home and in the marketplace but she also has compassion and time for those who are needy. She is active as an advocate and a helper of the poor.

In verses 21 and 22, "*When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.*" At home all is well. She makes the family clothes and decorates the house in a way that is fit for the cover of COUNTRY LIVING magazine.

We are told in verse 23, "*Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.*" Don't think this amazing woman overshadows her husband. He is no ordi-

nary man. His power and stature in the community are significant. He is a member of the city council—highly respected by everyone, famous and successful in his own right.

In verse 24, "*She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with*

***Character is ...goodness on the inside that directs her response to the circumstances on the outside.***

sashes.” It seems that she had some free time and excess energy. Her land deals and vineyard were doing well and everything was humming along smoothly at home. So she started yet another business on the side, manufacturing and selling clothes.

In verse 25, “*She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.*” This is one “together” woman. Her words are wise. She is so psychologically secure that she actually laughs at threats of future problems.

Verse 26 tells us, “*She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.*” Perhaps this refers to the seminars she gives on being a Together Woman. She is so good at it that she teaches other people how to do it as well.

In verse 27, “*She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.*” She is completely in control. And she never loafers.

Verse 28, “*Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.*” Her children and her husband adore this woman. They think she is great and tell her so.

In verse 29 her husband tells her, “*Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.*” In case you have not already guessed, she is Number One! There may be a lot of other women who are very good, but they don’t measure up to her. She is the best.

According to verse 30, “*Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.*” Certainly there is much more to her than good looks, but it is nice to note that she is very good-looking with charm and beauty, but she does not let it go to her head. Who she is on the inside is even more beautiful than who she is on the outside.

Verse 31, “*Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.*” She, indeed, deserves a reward for she is an amazing person.

This description is prefaced with a most appropriate question back in verse 10: “*A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.*” Who can find such a woman as is here described? Susan Yates, author of the book *And Then I Had Kids* says, “There are no

supermoms. There’s no such animal. If there is, she’s lying.” So who wrote Proverbs 31? Was it some idealistic 26-year-old male writing out a job description of his future spouse. Or maybe it was a professional writer for Hallmark Cards getting ready for Mother’s Day.

Frankly, a lot of women who hear Proverbs 31 are more discouraged than encouraged. They struggle to balance career, marriage, home and personal life. Or, they feel guilty about not having children. Or, they stay at home with their children and resent the implications of others that they should have outside jobs. Or, they are single moms with no husbands to praise them. Or, single women who have neither husbands nor children. These words can be tough on 100% of Christian women who do not seem to quite measure up to this biblical standard.

Especially focus in on verse 28 where it says, “*Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.*” The essence of this woman is not what time she gets up or when she goes to bed, what she gets for real estate or whether she has a vineyard or stitches clothes or any of the things that are here described about her circumstances. She is praiseworthy because of her character, not for her circumstances. The woman of Proverbs 31 had an unusual set of circumstances. Her opportunities and her abilities were great and she demonstrated her sterling character through them.

You say, “With a few servants, good looks, money and a super-husband anyone could show good character!” That is so obviously not true that it is hardly worth comment. Every generation is strewn with the wrecked lives of men and women who seemingly had it all and demonstrated rotten character—abusing and losing everything. An old saying goes like this: “It takes a steady hand to hold a full cup.” And it takes sterling character to handle great prosperity.

The reason her children and her husband praise her is because of her character—not her real estate deals or cooking or late hours. Verse 10 is right, “*A (woman) of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.*” Character is the combination of internal qualities and convictions that are right and good. It is

goodness on the inside that directs her response to the circumstances on the outside.

To character add godliness. This is a woman who is more concerned about what God thinks than what anybody else thinks. God is by far the most important person in her life and priorities. This woman would walk away from all material gain if that were what God wanted her to do. She is what she is and does what she does because of God, not gain.

The Bible has a long and contrasting list of women who were and were not women of character and godliness. Eve had it all. Perfect paradise! But she chose against character and godliness and for sin.

Ruth had a heathen heritage and youthful widowhood. She could have been anti-God and bitter. Instead she turned against her heathenism and to the Lord. Character and godliness!

Hannah struggled with infertility, but she did not compromise her spirituality. She was a woman of prayer. God gave her a son and she was thrilled. But, when God took Samuel back while he was still a boy, Hannah surrendered him to the Lord.

Gomer is a little-known main character of the Bible. Her husband, Hosea, was even better than the guy in Proverbs 31:23. He was a prophet of God and author of the Old Testament book named for him. Gomer and Hosea had three children, 2 sons and a daughter. She had it all, but she walked away from it to have sex with a series of lovers. Her husband loved her, forgave her and repeatedly brought her back home, but she kept on leaving. No character. No godliness.

Of course, the list ought to include Mary. Mary was a somewhat unwilling mother who nearly was divorced before she was married. But through it all, and her circumstances were far from easy, she repeatedly demonstrated herself to be a woman of character and godliness.

All of this is to say that what makes a woman praiseworthy is not perfection. What makes her

praiseworthy is character and godliness no matter what the circumstances.

This raises two pressing and practical questions for many women. The first question: “What if I’m not like this? What if I am not the woman of godliness and character that I should be?” Or the second question: “What if I am a woman of character and godliness (even through some very challenging circumstances) but I receive no praise from my husband and my children do not rise up and call me “blessed”?”

Here are straightforward answers to these questions. First, become a woman of character and godliness regardless of what you have been or are now. God is the God of wonderful new beginnings. And, if your children or your husband do not praise you, continue in your character and godliness and wait for the guaranteed praise and delight of God for eternity.

But these questions are better answered with a true story. It’s the story of Monica who was

born into a Christian home and was taught the truths of the Bible from earliest childhood. When she was about 20 years old she married a man named Pat who was not a Christian. He was a total pagan with a fiery temper and loose morals. It was an aw-

ful mistake and she lived with the consequences of this bad marriage for a very long time. They lived in the town of Tagaste where her husband was a member of the city council.

They had two sons and a daughter. Monica did her best to instruct them all in Christian faith from the time they were born. Her daughter and younger son responded well and walked with the Lord from an early age. The older son, Gus, responded initially but it turned out to be superficial. As he grew into adolescence, more and more he rejected his mother’s teaching.

Gus was an interesting guy. He had his father’s fiery temperament. He was bright, articulate and an excellent speaker. However, there

*...what makes a woman praiseworthy is not perfection. What makes her praiseworthy is character and godliness no matter what the circumstances.*

were growing problems. He lost interest in schoolwork. All he wanted to do was play, and he constantly cheated in order to win at games.

He finally got interested in his high school studies while at a private school, but when he was 17 his father died. A family friend began paying his school bills. At age 18 he began living with his girlfriend. She became pregnant and bore a son. In a moment of passion Gus named him Adoedatus, “by God given”. He and his girlfriend lived together 13 years and never married.

The rest of his story is too long to tell here. Gus became very interested in classical studies and received a good education. Then he became involved in a strange religious cult for 10 years, actively evangelizing to draw others in.

Through all this his mother prayed for him, but he did not rise up and call her blessed, nor did her husband praise her. In fact, Gus would trick her, lying to her to give the impression that he had changed his ways. On one special occasion he told her he would come home and do what he was supposed to do. She was delighted and went to pray for him in a seaside chapel. While she was praying, he broke his promise and boarded a ship to leave town and get away from her.

When Gus was 33 years old he finally came to Jesus Christ. His mother was 55 by then. She had moved to be near him and was thrilled to see the change.

The next summer they vacationed together at the seashore. One day she told Gus:

“Son, what has befallen me? Nothing has any more charms for me in this life. What I am yet to do here, and why I am here, I do not know, every hope of this world being now consummated. Once there was a reason why I should wish to live longer, that I might see you a believing Christian before I die. God has now richly granted me this beyond measure, in permitting me to see you in His service, having totally abandoned the world. What yet have I to do here?”

A few days later she became ill and died.

Monica’s circumstances are not the same as the woman of Proverbs 31, but they were both women of godliness and character. It is not the painful or the pleasant circumstances of life that make a woman worthy to be praised and called blessed. It is her character and godliness.

Let me tell you the epilogue to this story from the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., one that Monica never lived to learn. Her son, Augustine, became a pastor, a bishop, a writer, a theologian and a saint. In fact, Saint Augustine, along with the Apostle Paul, may be considered among the few men who truly shaped Christianity. He founded the Augustinian order that produced Martin Luther. It is Monica’s son after whom the city of Saint Augustine, Florida, is named.

Monica was a woman of character. She was a woman of God. And so may you be. May your children rise up and call you blessed. May your husband praise you. But, most of all, may Jesus Christ himself someday say to you, “Well done, good and faithful woman!”

*Faith Matters*® is the Broadcast Ministry of  
 Leith Anderson and Wooddale Church  
 6630 Shady Oak Road  
 Eden Prairie MN 55344  
 952-944-6300  
[www.faithmatters.fm](http://www.faithmatters.fm)  
 ©Leith Anderson