



The **Brave** Woman (Entrepreneur)

Theme: "God's wisdom for work is the same for men as for women."

Biblical Lecture: Proverbs 31:10-31

Starting Questions: Is only the man designated to work? What does God say about working for women? Should the work be different?

Proverbs 31:10-31

- 10 A wife of noble character who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies.
- 11 Her husband has full confidence in her
and lacks nothing of value.
- 12 She brings him good, not harm,
all the days of her life.
- 13 She selects wool and flax
and works with eager hands.
- 14 She is like the merchant ships,
bringing her food from afar.
- 15 She gets up while it is still night;
she provides food for her family
and portions for her female servants.
- 16 She considers a field and buys it;
out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.
- 17 She sets about her work vigorously;
her arms are strong for her tasks.
- 18 She sees that her trading is profitable,
and her lamp does not go out at night.
- 19 In her hand she holds the distaff
and grasps the spindle with her fingers.
- 20 She opens her arms to the poor
and extends her hands to the needy.
- 21 When it snows, she has no fear for her household;
for all of them are clothed in scarlet.
- 22 She makes coverings for her bed;
she is clothed in fine linen and purple.
- 23 Her husband is respected at the city gate,
where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.
- 24 She makes linen garments and sells them,
and supplies the merchants with sashes.
- 25 She is clothed with strength and dignity;
she can laugh at the days to come.
- 26 She speaks with wisdom,

and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
27 She watches over the affairs of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
28 Her children arise and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:
29 “Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all.”
30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.
31 Honor her for all that her hands have done,
and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

Reflection Reading

A remarkable connection between the book of Proverbs and the world of work occurs at the end of the book. Lady Wisdom, who we meet at the beginning of the book ([Prov. 1:20-33](#), [8:1-9:12](#)), reappears in street clothes in the final 22 verses of the book ([Prov. 31:10-31](#)) as a living, breathing woman, termed “the virtuous woman” (KJV). Some translators use “wife” instead of “woman,” probably because the woman’s husband and children are mentioned in the passage. (Both “wife” and “woman” are possible translations of the Hebrew *ishshah*.) Indeed, she finds fulfillment in her family and ensures that “her husband is known in the city gates, taking his seat among the elders of the land” ([Prov. 31:23](#)). But the text focuses on the woman’s work as an entrepreneur with a cottage industry and its servants/ workers to manage ([Prov. 31:15](#)). [Proverbs 31:10-31](#) does not merely apply to the workplace; it takes place in a workplace.

The book of Proverbs is summarized, then, in a poem praising a woman who is the wise manager of diverse enterprises ranging from weaving to wine making to trade in the market. Translators variously use the words “virtuous” (KJV), “capable” (NRSV), “excellent” (NASB), or “of noble character” (NIV) to describe this woman’s character in [Prov. 31:10](#). But these terms fail to capture the element of strength or might present in the underlying Hebrew word (*chayil*). When applied to a man, this same term is translated “strength,” as in [Prov. 31:3](#). In a great majority of its 246 appearances in the Old Testament, it applies to fighting men (e.g., David’s “mighty warriors,” [1 Chronicles 7:2](#)). Translators tend to downplay the element of strength when the word is applied to a woman, as with Ruth, whom English translations describe as “noble” (NIV, TNIV), “virtuous” (NRSV, KJV) or “excellent” (NASB). But the word is the same, whether applied to men or women. In describing the woman of [Proverbs 31:10-31](#), its meaning is best understood as strong or valiant, as further indicated by [Prov. 31:17](#), “She girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong.” Al Wolters argues on account of such martial language that the most appropriate translation is “Valiant Woman.”^[2] Accordingly, we will refer to the woman of [Proverbs 31:10-31](#) as the “Valiant Woman,” which captures both the strength and the virtue carried by the Hebrew *chayil*.

The concluding passage in the book of Proverbs characterizes this woman of strength as a wise worker in five sets of practices in her workplace. The high importance of this section is signaled in two ways. First, it is in the form of an acrostic poem, meaning that its lines begin with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, in order, making it memorable. Second, it is placed as the climax and summary of the entire book. Accordingly, the five sets of practices we observe in the Valiant Woman will serve as a framework for exploring the entire book.

To some people in the ancient near east, and even to some now, portraying a woman as a model of wise entrepreneurship would be surprising. Despite the fact that God gave the gift of work to men and women equally (Genesis 1 and 2), women's work has often been denigrated and treated with less dignity than men's. Following the example of the book, we will refer to this wise worker as she, understanding that God's wisdom is available equally to men and women. She functions in the book as an affirmation of the dignity of every person's work.

As always in the book of Proverbs, the way of wisdom flows out of the fear of the Lord. After all the Valiant Woman's abilities and virtues are described and honored, the source of her wisdom is revealed. "A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (Prov. 31:30).

Dynamic Reflection:

1. How does Proverbs 31:10-31 describes the woman?
2. According to vr. 13, what correspondence can you see between the clothes described and the work mentioned?
3. How do the translations into Spanish of the Hebrew word chayil, does not help to present a more precise description for the woman?
4. How do proverbs help us dignify work not only in men but also in women?
5. According to verses 29-31, what is the key to the dignity of work in women?

Application:

Think of two ways you can apply this teaching in your work environment:

1. How did your mentality and actions change after reflecting on this?

2. What can you do to practice this teaching in your work environment?