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INTRODUCTION

We're about to begin our study of Proverbs 31 together! In fifteen to twenty minutes a day (not necessarily all at once) we will learn about the excellent wife, while we also learn how to *study* the Bible in an active, flexible, rewarding way.

Why Proverbs 31? Here we are, many of us struggling to make time for even *15 minutes* of Bible study, and we're going to spend thirty days taking a close-up look at *the* superwoman of Scripture.

You know who I'm talking about:

- The lady who gets up while “it is yet night”, but whose “lamp does not go out at night”
- The one who has time and money for real estate investments and the energy to plant vineyards and sell the clothing she makes
- The one who speaks with wisdom and kindness
- The mother whose children rise up and bless her
- The wife who does her husband good and not evil all the days of her life

Talk about intimidating.

Or is she? Is this a *real-life* woman who walked the streets of Jerusalem? Did she negotiate the price for a field with a baby in her arms and a toddler playing in the dirt beside her? Did her children actually

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thank her for washing their faces, cooking their food, and making their clothes?

As we study this ode to the virtuous woman, we'll think about questions like these:

- Are we really supposed to surpass every other woman who has “done excellently”?
- What can we emulate in this inspiring-yet-sometimes-discouraging picture of the ideal woman?
- What can we quit feeling guilty about *not* doing or being?
- What are the husband and children *really* praising when they rise up and call this woman blessed?

Besides your assignment each day, every lesson also includes ideas for looking at the passage with a lively bunch of children. You may want to do these as you do your study, or you may choose to simply ignore them. Another option is to take another pass through Proverbs 31 with your children *later*, after you have finished your own study.

The lessons in this study are longer than those in our other “Busy Mamas” studies. They will probably take at least fifteen to twenty minutes to complete. If you can't carve that much time out of your day, take more than one day to complete a lesson. (No one is going to check thirty days from now to see if you've finished the study. Take your time!)

Also, if you choose to use a smartphone or tablet for doing your study, be prepared to do a bit of your own exploring. The instructions I give for using *BlueLetterBible* are for its **online version**. *BlueLetterBible's* apps (for *iPhone* or *iPad*) look different, and may not line up exactly with my step-by-step directions, but they're still easy to use. You'll find your way around!

If this is your first time doing a “Busy Mamas” Bible study, be sure to read **Appendix B, “Getting Started”**. It tells you what materials you will need and offers some strategies for successfully making time to study — even with a houseful of kids.



DAY 1: THE ROOT

The virtuous wife of Proverbs 31 is one inspiring lady! Look at all she accomplished — spinning, weaving, sewing, real estate, farming, shopping, ministering to the poor, managing her household.

But she can also be a bit discouraging. How in the world did she ever manage to *do* all those things? I can remember days when it was a challenge to even get out of my bathrobe before my husband came home from work!

If you're tempted to feel like a failure every time you think about the woman described in Proverbs 31, I think you're going to feel a whole lot better by the time we've spent thirty days getting to know her better. She shouldn't intimidate us. We should admire and emulate her!

Before we start looking at all the fruit of this amazing woman's life, we're going to take a look at the roots that nourish this fruitful tree!

Assignment: Pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance as you begin your study today. **Then read all of Proverbs 31.** Today is the only day we will be reading the first nine verses of the chapter. After this, we'll be focusing on just verses 10-31, where we learn about the virtuous wife.

As you read Proverbs 31, look for the following information:

- Who wrote this chapter of Proverbs?

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- Whose words is the author sharing?
- Who is being spoken to?
- When you have finished reading, take out your notebook and **record what you have found**.
- Then look in the chapter for the words **praised, bless, and blessed**.
- **Highlight** each appearance of those words with a yellow marker or colored pencil.
- Make a **simple chart like this** to organize your observations:

| <i>Verse reference</i> | <i>Who or what is doing the praising</i> | <i>Who is being praised</i> |
|------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| | | |

- Reread the verses that include the words **praise** and **bless**, and use your chart to organize what you find. (At least one verse will not directly state who is doing the praising, so don't let that worry you.)
- Pray about what you have found. What is the **main characteristic** of the woman who is praised in this chapter?

Is this a **trait that you and the Proverbs 31 woman can share**, even if you don't know how to spin yarn or plant vineyards like she did?

As we continue to study this chapter, **we should keep this truth in mind**. This is the root that produces all the beautiful fruit of the virtuous wife's life.

For your children:

You will need paper, and pencils or crayons for this activity.

- After choosing a translation of Proverbs 31 that your children will understand, **read verses 10-31 aloud**, asking the children to each listen for one verse that they would like to **illustrate**. They should not tell anyone which verse they have chosen.

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- When you have finished reading, have them each **draw a picture** to represent one verse from the passage.
- When they are done with their drawings, have them hold them out where everyone can see them, and read the chapter again.
- As the children hear a verse that they believe has been illustrated, they should raise their hands and point to the appropriate drawing.
- When all the children's drawings have been identified, read verses 30 and 31 one more time. Ask the children to tell you what kind of woman is being praised in these verses. Discuss what that means.