

Sep 15, 2019

Proverbs 31:10-31

Everyday Wisdom:
Wonder Woman

Jonathan M. Romig
CornerstoneWestford.com

Do you remember when the movie *Wonder Woman* came out in 2017? *Wonder Woman* featured a **strong, noble, courageous**, sometimes **insecure**, but ultimately **heroic** female super hero, the **Amazon warrior Diana Prince**. When this movie came out it **inspired little girls** everywhere.

Right after this movie **released in June 2017** this little girl was dressing up as Wonder Woman with a **huge grin**. She **didn't care** it wasn't **Halloween** or that it was **summer**. She was *Wonder Woman!*¹

This little girl named **Milah** dressed up as *Wonder Woman* and her mom took pictures of her on “the **streets of New York City** like a true superhero.”²

One **dad** actually **recreated** some of the *Wonder Woman* scenes with his “three-year-old daughter Nellee.”³ His daughter “was so obsessed [with the costume] she couldn't take it off.”

But my favorite picture is of last year's Trunk or Treat when **Elijah** was so inspired he asked Monica if he could dress up like **Superman** and her *Wonder Woman*.

Wonder Woman has had a **powerful effect** on women and girls in our **culture**. They've walked away from the film feeling **inspired** and **empowered**. I think that's **how we're supposed to feel** when we encounter the **Wise Woman in Proverbs 31**, the **original Wonder Woman**.

At first she can make us feel like we'll **never measure up** or be **as perfect** as her, but I don't think that's how we're **supposed** to feel. We're supposed to see her as **an inspiration**, as the **best of us**. The **wise woman of Proverbs 31** is meant to **move us** to take **everything we've learned** in the book of Proverbs and **live it out**. **The Wise Woman:**

She is the woman we all should be.

The **wise woman** is the *Wonder Woman* (or wonder man) we should all **emulate, try to be like**. Proverbs is mostly written from the **perspective** of a **father** to **his son**. Remember how the book opened?

Proverbs 1:8

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching. (NIV)

Then the father began to **paint wisdom** as a **strong, attractive, intelligent, God-fearing woman** (Prov 1:20-33). As we read the first nine chapters we discovered woman wisdom to be a **metaphor for God**, and ultimately for **Christ Jesus himself** (Prov 8:22-31; Col 1:15-17). So **the call** is for young men (and women) to pursue God and his wisdom.

Now women and girls are usually the ones who go to Proverbs 31 and say, “Here's the **kind of woman I'm supposed to be**.” But this text is **first written** to **teenage boys** about the **kind of girl** they should **find** and **marry**. It's written from the **perspective** of a **mother** speaking to **her son** (**King Lemuel's mom** speaking to **Lemuel**). **How often** do you **hear** about a **boy's youth retreat** studying the Proverbs 31 woman? **Never!**

But that's who it's primarily for. With that in mind I do think women are the **secondary audience** and it's good for girls to **aspire to be like** this woman as the. So there's **two ways** we **should hear** this passage:

- Guys, this is the kind of girl you should look to find and marry.
- Girls, this is the kind of girl you should want to be like.

But I want to take a moment and **reverse that** because if we were to flip over to **Psalm 112** we would find a **matching** Psalm very much like Proverbs 31 describing the **ideal** man and **husband**. I'm not going to read it but with that in mind I want to say:

- Guys, this is the kind of girl you should want to be like.
- Girls, this is the kind of guy you should want to marry.

She is the woman we all should be. Now with all that in mind what kind of woman is she? **She is:**

1) Valorous (v10)

This Hebrew word for "noble" is often used in the Old Testament as a **military term**. It's used to describe **valiant warriors** (Joshua 1:14). She is **courageous** and **determined** and **doesn't run away in fear**. So she is like a **female superhero** or the **Disney princess Mulan**. If you're not familiar with Mulan, it starts when the **Huns** invade **China** and a **man** from **every family** is **conscripted** into the **army**. But Mulan's father is **older** and **feeble** and **can't fight** so Mulan **disguises** herself as a **man** and **joins the army** in his place. She's **courageous**, **noble**, and a **mighty warrior**. *A Proverbs 31 woman is valorous.* She is also...

2) Trustworthy (v11-12)

Tremper Longman III translates v11, "Her husband **entrusts his heart** to her..."⁴ Then he adds, "The heart stands for one's **core personality** and **not specifically emotions**... it means that the husband is confident to make himself **totally vulnerable** to her. He trusts her to follow through and take care of him and the household."⁵ *Find a wife (or a husband) who is completely trustworthy, in the big things and small.* She is...

3) Diligent (v13-19)

Before I go any further I want to point out that Proverbs 31:10-31 is an **acrostic poem** based on the **Hebrew alphabet**. In our **training** for the **upcoming intergenerational outreach program** we created an acrostic poem based on our **names**. So for example **Doreen's name** created this acrostic poem:

D - dependable
O - organized
R - reliable
E - empathetic
E - endearing
N - neat

Doreen is all those things! The reason I'm not sharing my own acrostic was that I was so bad at this that for "o" in Jonathan I wrote **Oreo**... If you were to read Proverbs 31 in Hebrew it would go something like this:

An **awesome** wife, who can find her?
A **blessed** lady, her husband trusts her.

A **caring** woman, she does him good all her life.

A **diligent** worker, she is skillful with her hands. (*Exalting Jesus in Proverbs* by Jonathan Akin)⁶

In verses 13-19 each acrostic **inspires us to be** a *diligent woman or man and to look for a diligent spouse*.

This woman really is hard working and industrious. Verse 12 says she works with her hands to process **wool** and **flax**. Although wool is relatively **easy** to process **flax is difficult and hard work**.⁷ You have to **plant** and **grow** the flax, **pull** it up at harvest (if you **cut** it you **shorten** your fiber), **bundle** and **dry** the flax linen, **comb** the **dried flax** to **collect** its **seeds**, **rot** the **inside** of the **plant** with **bacteria** to **free** the **fibers** from the **stalk**, **beat** the **wood fragments** off the **stalks**, **scrape away** any **remaining shives**, **pull** the **fibers** through a **hackle**, which is like a **comb** made of **nails**, **spin** the fiber, **weave** it, and finally **bleach** it. It's a long process but the end result is the "strongest natural fiber in the world."⁸ It lasts a **long time** (is often given as an **heirloom**) and has "**Antibacterial** properties" because "it **wicks moisture** and **dries out much faster** than **cotton**." To **process flax** you have to be a pretty **hard working** and **industrious person**.

The Proverbs 31 woman (or man) is **entrepreneurial** and **financially** responsible, trading with others and providing food. She gets up before the **break of dawn** to prepare food for her **family** and **servants**. I've heard that most **CEOs** and **executives** wake up before 6am, **around 90%**.⁹ We should all be diligent and that may mean getting up. I'd also like to point out that she does have **servants to help her**, which is perhaps why she can **accomplish so much**. She is *diligent* and also...

4) Compassionate (v20)

She's **benevolent** and **kind**. She goes out of her way to show **care** for the **least of these**.

Proverbs 31:20

She opens her arms to the poor
and extends her hands to the needy. (NIV)

Men, we're also called to do this. The **matching text** in Psalm 112 says:

Psalm 112:9

He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever;
his horn is exalted in honor. (ESV)

In the movie *Wonder Woman*, Diana hears about **World War I** and believes the **evil god Ares**, the **god of war**, is **manipulating humankind** to fight each other, both **British** and **Germans**. She sets out to stop him and **end the war**. As one reviewer wrote, "Diana's mission is fueled not by revenge or selfish gain, but by compassion."¹⁰ Chances are none of us are going to have to fight **Ares the god of war** but we can all **stand against oppression** and **injustice** in the places God has called us, in our family and at school or at work, and we can go out of our way to show *compassion* to those in need.

5) Prudent (v21-22, 24-25)

That means she can **predict** what **might happen** in the **future** and **plan accordingly**. When it snows, her and her family aren't cold because she made them clothes or **paid** the **heating bill** (v21). Verse 25 literally says, "she **laughs** at the future." She's not afraid. She's **prepared**. She looks into the future, get's out her **planner**, and writes down what needs to be done. At our house we have a **monthly calendar** that's on a **whiteboard** in our **kitchen**. Maybe your family has a **group calendar** through **google** or **apple**. We should all **plan** for the future like the wise woman.

6) Honorable (v23, 28, 31)

The way this woman carries herself and supports her family brings **respect** to her husband. People look at him and say, “**Wow! You married up. You chose wisely.**” Her husband recognizes how great she is, and praises her with **words of affirmation**, but so do her **children**, they recognize how great their **mom** is.

Proverbs 31:28

Her children arise and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her: (NIV)

Everything said about this woman **can be true of a man**. He can also bring honor to his family.

Psalms 112:2

His offspring will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed. (ESV)

The wise man or woman is honorable. And the most important quality, she...

7) Loves the Lord (v26, 30)

She **knows** the **Lord** and his **word**.

Proverbs 31:26

She speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on her tongue. (NIV)

This isn't just that this woman is good at **giving advice** but that she is good at **pointing** her husband and son to the **Scriptures** and what God says. Remember how the book of **Proverbs opened?**

Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (NIV)

The father told the son to **find** the “fear of the Lord,” which is a **reverent awe** for **who God is**. One of the ways we can develop this good fear of God is **if the Lord calls us into marriage** by **finding a woman** (or if you're a girl finding a man) **who loves the Lord**. Your **spouse** has a **huge impact** on your **walk with God**.

Proverbs 31:30

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

It's not about **outward beauty** or **strength** but about an **inward** love for the Lord. *The wise woman is valorous, trustworthy, diligent, compassionate, prudent, honorable, and she loves the Lord.* Sounds easy, right? This woman in Proverbs 31 is meant to be an **inspiration**, a **model** of something **greater**, of something we **should become**, something we can **aspire to**. But in the end no matter how hard we try she is also something we **can't really become**.

She is the woman we all can't be.

The reason *Wonder Woman* is so amazing is because she's **fiction**. And even if she wasn't fiction, she'd be a **Greek Goddess**, and **none of us are that**, except for **maybe Andrew...**

We are to **aspire** to becoming like her, but ultimately we need to recognize that we can't. **We all fall short.** This is because lady wisdom is **ultimately a metaphor for God**, and is **embodied by Christ Jesus himself**. Jesus had this to say about **himself** and **lady wisdom**.

Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds." (NIV)

*The wise woman is the **person** we should all be, but can't be, but Christ could be.* Christ **embodied valor** as he went to the **cross** to **win the battle** between **heaven** and **hell**. Christ was **trustworthy** and **diligent** and **compassionate**, **healing** the **blind** and the **lame** and caring for the **least of these**. Christ was **prudent**. He saw his **path** would **lead** him to the **cross** and he walked it anyway. He died the most **shameful death** to **honor** his Father in heaven, who then **honored him** (Phil 2:9-11). Christ did it all because he **loved** his **Father** and he **loves us**.

In the movie *Wonder Woman* does finally meet up with **Ares**, the **god of war**, a type of **Satan figure**. But to **her surprise** **Ares reveals** that he's not the one who **caused** the war. It was **people themselves**.¹¹ All he did was whisper in **humankind's ears** **ideas** of **war** and **wickedness**. We **chose evil** because we're "**inherently corrupt**."¹² What does *Wonder Woman* do? She **saves a corrupt** and **broken** humankind. Sounds a little like the **gospel story**, doesn't it? But *Wonder Woman* is **fiction**. **Jesus is real**. He died to **save corrupt** and **broken people** and make us **new**. Will you **accept** his **free offer** of **salvation**?

*The wise woman is the woman we all should be but can't be... **But because of Christ...***

She is the woman we are all becoming.

If you **repent** of your **sins** and **believe in Jesus**, if you **confess** you're **not Wonder Woman** or **Superman** and in fact **rather broken** and that you **need savior Jesus**, he will rescue you. The **Bible** tells us that everyone who **knows Christ** is a part of **his bride**, the **church**, the **noble bride**.

I think the last chapter of Proverbs **paints a picture** of not only who we should become but **who we will become**. Remember how the wise woman clothes herself with "**fine linen**?" (Prov 31:22) In Revelation 19 the prophet John gives us a **glimpse** of what the people of God **will be** when we're **finally united with Christ**, a **bride clothed in... fine linen**.¹³

Revelation 19:6-8

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

"Hallelujah!

For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.

Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.) (NIV)

The **noble wife** has become the **noble bride**.¹⁴ The **wise woman** of Proverbs 31, our *Wonder Woman*, is the **kind of person each one of us will become** when **Christ finally brings us home**. By **God's grace**, and

Christ's victory on the **cross**, we can **begin to become** a little like her, like Jesus, in **this lifetime**. We can become **strong, noble, and courageous**, but every time we **fall short** and **feel insecure** we remember **our hero, Christ Jesus**. Jesus defeated **Satan (Ares)** and **our sins** and **offers us eternal life with him**.

When the **little boy** and **little girl** in **your hearts** wishes you could be **Wonder Woman for a day**, remember that **Christ Jesus** is making you into **the wise woman for eternity**.

Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon above, which includes endnotes and references, or listen to it through Apple podcasts or Google Play Music. Read the story of our church here.

- ¹ Instagram. *crisel_s_fit*. Published June 2017. Accessed September 13, 2019. https://www.instagram.com/p/BU2KOqjgCMB/?utm_source=ig_embed.
- ² Kayla Greaves, 'Wonder Woman' Has Left Both Little Girls and Boys Feeling Inspired, published June 12, 2017, accessed September 13 2019, https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2017/06/12/wonder-woman-boys-girls_n_17058146.html.
- ³ Melissa Willets, *You HAVe to See This Toddler's Epic Wonder Woman Photo Shoot*, accessed September 13, 2019. <https://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/everything-kids/you-have-to-see-this-toddlers-epic-wonder-woman-photo-shoot/>.
- ⁴ Tremper Longman III. *Proverbs*. Page 542.
- ⁵ Tremper Longman III. *Proverbs*. Page 542-43.
- ⁶ Akin, Jonathan. *Exalting Jesus in Proverbs (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary)*. B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.
- ⁷ *From Flax to Linen, Ulster Linen*, accessed September 14, 2019, <https://ulsterlinen.com/flax-to-linen/>.
- ⁸ *5 Reasons Why Linen is a Luxury*, accessed 9/14/19, <https://magiclinen.com/blog/5-reasons-why-linen-is-a-luxury>.
- ⁹ Andrew Merle, *This is When Successful People Wake Up*, published July 17, 2017, accessed September 12, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/this-is-when-successful-people-wake-up_b_596d17a3e4b0376db8b65a1a.
- ¹⁰ Ashley Linne, *Wonder Woman*, published June 2017, accessed September 12, 2019, <https://preachthestory.com/wonder-woman/>.
- ¹¹ Wikiquote contributors, "Wonder Woman (2017 film)," *Wikiquote*, , [https://en.wikiquote.org/w/index.php?title=Wonder_Woman_\(2017_film\)&oldid=2587382](https://en.wikiquote.org/w/index.php?title=Wonder_Woman_(2017_film)&oldid=2587382) (accessed September 13, 2019).
- ¹² Wikipedia contributors, "Wonder Woman (2017 film)," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wonder_Woman_\(2017_film\)&oldid=915211290](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wonder_Woman_(2017_film)&oldid=915211290) (accessed September 13, 2019).
- ¹³ The word for "fine linen" in the LXX (Proverbs 31:22) is βύσσος. The word for "fine linen" in the Greek New Testament (Rev 19:8) is βύσσινος.
- ¹⁴ The Proverbs 31 woman is a ruby or jewel to her husband (Prov 31:1). When Christ finally comes the New Jerusalem, the city of God, is also called the bride (Rev 21:2). The city itself, which is another picture of all God's people, is called a jewel. Revelation 21:19 says, "The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald..." (NIV) Proverbs 31:31 in the ESV also talks about fruit. Revelation 22:1-2 talks about the fruit from the tree of life. These are all small hints, perhaps, that John is helping us make this connection between woman wisdom in Proverbs 31:10-31 and the bride of Christ, the people of God, us, in Revelation 19-22.