

**From Dating, To Engagement, To Marriage:
A Man's Meditation on Proverbs 31**

In Proverbs 31, we find a beautiful, twenty-two verse acrostic poem describing an excellent wife. While these verses focus on the character of a godly wife, they are written for a young man to discern and desire these characteristics in a future wife. For men seeking marriage, these verses can provide a fruitful place to prayerfully consider the kind of woman he should marry. With that in mind I've drawn a few questions from each verse, making contemporary proverbs that address an agrarian world.

For practical purposes, these questions do not all need to be answered in the affirmative to proceed towards marriage. No one marries a perfect spouse. But these questions can be asked to clarify the enigmatic question: Is this the one? More specifically, when answers arrive as weaknesses or negatives, godly men should ask: Can I embrace that weakness? Or better, is God calling me to lead, love, and lay down my life to bolster this woman and to cultivate weaknesses towards greater strength.

These questions should be asked with significant soul-searching and self-examination; they should not be used to judge another or to point out faults. They are for clarity, not condemnation. That said, many marriages stumble because biblical wisdom has not been applied from the start. These questions, therefore, are meant to stir up wisdom and to press young men to consider from Scripture the kind of characteristics that should be present in a godly wife. In so doing, the man should also grow in wisdom.

¹⁰An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.

An excellent wife is from the Lord (Prov. 19:14), not from man. So in what ways can you see that God has brought the two of you together?

Does this marriage have the mark of God's handiwork, or yours?

Do you treasure her? Why? What would you lose without her?

¹¹The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.

Do you trust her? What makes her trustworthy?

How does she help you? Specifically, how does she help you "gain"?

What sort of gain are you looking for? Assuming that gain is biblically defined, does she help you (cf. Gen. 2:18) or does she compete with you in that gain?

¹²She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.

Does she have a pattern [all the days of her life] of doing you good? Or does she compete with you in doing good?

Proverbs is filled with verses that speak of the quarrelsome wife (see 19:13; 21:9; 25:24; 27:15). So do you quarrel about the good you want to do?

Is her overall impact good or harmful for the good works God calls you to do?

¹³She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands.

Does she work hard? Does someone else have to motivate her to work?

How does she respond to stress and the need to work?

Does she work hard with respect to domestic needs [wool and flax]? Or are her endeavors entirely / mostly / partly outside the home?

¹⁴She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar.

Is she wise in the ways of the world?

Does she understand how to acquire materials for the home?

¹⁵She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens.

Does she use her energies to serve others, even staying up late or rising early to care for others? Or does she spend her energies on herself and her desires?

How does she treat other women—mother, sister(s), friends?

Does she have good relationships with other women?

¹⁶She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.

Is there wisdom in her works? What has she done with the gifts and opportunities given to her?

When she makes plans do those plans accord with Scripture and wise principles of decision making? Or does she make plans and seek things that are unwise?

To borrow a principle about oaths and women (see Numbers 30), will you need to correct and/or make up for decisions she makes? Or can you trust that her decision making is sound?

¹⁷She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong.

How does she take care of herself physically?

Patterns of life (eating, exercise, activity, etc.) will manifest over time. Are you on the same page regarding these things?

In your estimation, does she spend too much time on herself, or not enough?

¹⁸She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night.

What level of self-confidence does she have? Is this a source of confidence or concern for you?

Is she secure in who she is in Christ? Or does her joy depend upon her works or lack thereof?

If she is prone to depression, anxiety, or moodiness, how is she responding to these? Is it with the truth of God's Word, prayer, the church, biblical counseling? Or is she looking to other sources outside of God's means of grace?

¹⁹She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle.

Does she take initiative with work? Or does she need to be told what to do?

Do her labors orient her away from the home, or in this verse, do they aim to build up the home?

Is she willing to learn / try new things?

²⁰She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.

Is she generous and giving? How do you know?

Does she enjoy serving others? Have you served together to see what she is like?

How does she treat people who are different, especially those less fortunate, than herself?

²¹She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet.

How does she relate to impending problems or crises?

Does anxiety lead her to prayer and action, or paralysis and worry?

What hardships has she gone through? And how did she handle it?

²²She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

Does she know how to care for herself? Or is she helplessly or selfishly dependent on others?

Does she need you to support her in all she does? Or does she show adult maturity?

How does she carry herself? Does she understand the riches she has in the Lord, or does she have an insatiable need to get things to make her happy?

²³Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.

Do those closest to you know her?

What do your friends, family, church think about her?

What does she think about those people who you care most about?

²⁴She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant.

What does she spend her time doing, making, writing, cultivating, etc.?

Are the works of her hands something that fits well with your vocational calling? How will they be a gain to your vocational calling, and not a harm / hindrance?

Also, what is her reputation with others, especially men? Is she flirtatious, trustworthy, respected? Does this give you confidence or concern in her fidelity?

²⁵Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.

Does she have a sense of humor? Especially, with regards to things that do not go her way?

How does she handle setbacks? What do past failures reveal about future failures?

Is she open handed with the future? Or does her laughter/joy depend on getting her way?

²⁶She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

How does she speak? How does she speak to you, to her parents, siblings, and those whom she doesn't get along?

Are her decisions based on biblical truth and wisdom, or on other principles that contradict Scripture?

Has she learned how to argue? Can she disagree with respect and kindness?

²⁷She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

What role has she played in her household? Is she a contributor or a consumer?

Does she perceive the needs of others around her?

Does she finish the tasks she begins? Or does start things that she does not finish?

²⁸Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

What do others say about her? And why?

How are the praises she receives related to the merits described of excellent wife?

²⁹"Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all."

How does she make you feel?

When you talk about her to others, do you sing her praises or lament her faults?

Can you say without reservation that you are excited to marry her?

³⁰Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

Does she fear the Lord? Does she possess a spiritual beauty

That said, are you physically attracted to her? Proverbs 5:18 instructs the husband to be intoxicated in the bride of his youth. We are not gnostics; this includes physical attraction.

Have you seen Christ-like growth in her life, such that you want to spend the rest of your life with her, cultivating grace and truth in the life of this woman?

³¹Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

Has she flourished in her relationship with God and others because of her relationship with you?

Are you willing to let her excel in all the ways God intends? How will you cultivate those gifts?

Will you try to keep her to yourself? Or are you willing to let her flourish, so that she blesses others?