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O N E



THE WISE  
WOMAN BUILDS  
HER HOME

*The wise woman builds her house,  
But the foolish tears it down with her own hands.*

PROVERBS 14:1 NASB

*Virtuous, trustworthy, energetic, physically fit, economical, unselfish, prepared, honorable, prudent, lovable, and God-fearing* are eleven qualities pictured by the Wise Woman of Proverbs in 31:10–31. Many believe that the woman described in this passage is simply a fantasy rather than a real woman whose life twenty-first-century Christian women are challenged to model in their own lives. However, the immutability (changelessness) of God would be in question if Proverbs 31:10–31 were not timelessly relevant. If we think that God changed His mind about one passage of Scripture, how can we be sure that He has not changed His mind about others? J. I. Packer, in



*Knowing God*, lists six attributes of God that are helpful to be reminded of before we study the eleven principles suggested in Proverbs 31:10–31 that help the Wise Woman build her home.

1. God's life does not change.
2. God's character does not change.
3. God's truth does not change.
4. God's ways do not change.
5. God's purposes do not change.
6. God's *Son* does not change.<sup>1</sup>

Since God does not change, then fellowship with Him, trust in His Word, living by faith, and embracing His principles are the same realities for twenty-first-century believers as they were for those of the Old and New Testaments. The description of the Wise Woman of Proverbs 31:10–31 is not designed to develop an inferiority complex within us—rather, it provides a biblical foundation for the creation of principles by which we, as Wise Women in progress, live our lives. While the outward historical context has changed since King Lemuel wrote Proverbs 31, the character principles have not.



*Martha, a college sophomore, was well-known throughout the college community for plainly speaking her mind. She appeared at my office door one afternoon with several forms in her hand, and stated, "I need to see you about changing my major to Home Economics." Since she was already a second-semester sophomore, I had the obligation to tell her that she could delay her graduation by changing majors at this point in her education. "That's all right," she replied, "Titus 2:3–5 says the younger women are to learn from the older, so I am changing my major so I can learn from you—if it takes longer, God will provide the resources for me." As she left my office I*

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*pondered Martha's words; she was right. I enjoyed the priceless privilege of imparting godly character to the younger women (though at that time they didn't realize that I was not that much older than they were), and she was to be commended on having the strength of character to acknowledge that . . .*

THE WISE WOMAN LEARNS  
FROM THE WISDOM OF OTHERS

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;  
A good understanding have all those who do His commandments;  
His praise endures forever.*

PSALM 111:10 NASB

Biblical wisdom “is both religious and practical. Stemming from the fear of the Lord (Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10), it branches out to touch all of life, as the extended commentary on wisdom in Proverbs indicates. Wisdom takes insights gleaned from the knowledge of God’s way and applies them in the daily walk.”<sup>2</sup> Scripture provides the basis for wise instruction (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10:6, reminds believers that “these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they [the Israelites] also lusted.” Titus 2:4–5 instructs the older women to “encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God may not be dishonored” (NASB). Solomon taught his son that “fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7). Our Wise Woman possesses a heart open to learning from the experience and wisdom of others.

*The MacArthur Study Bible* introduces the book of “Proverbs” by stating, “The proverbs are short, pithy sayings which express timeless truth and wisdom. They arrest one’s thoughts, causing the reader to reflect on how one might apply



divine principles to life situations. . . . To the Hebrew mind, wisdom was not knowledge alone, but the skill of living a godly life as God intended man to live.”<sup>3</sup>

## ELEVEN PRINCIPLES OF THE WISE WOMAN

*Many daughters have done well,  
But you excel them all.*

PROVERBS 31:29

Essential to us becoming Wise Women is the personal application of biblical principles that stimulate our decisions and actions. *Principle* is defined as “an accepted or professed rule of action or conduct.”<sup>4</sup> Pondering the question, “What are my specific abilities, heritage, and talents that make me unique and determine my actions or conduct?” will determine the way we apply the principles to our lives. Their application ultimately determines our character—and whether we are considered Wise Women or fools. Let’s take a look at eleven principles that will keep us away from foolish behavior.



*The afternoon sky was dark and rain was pounding against the windows when the handsome young man entered the Home Economics Center. He surveyed the now empty building and paused at my office door. “Are you Dr. Ennis?” he inquired. “I am, and how may I help you?” “Is it true that the purpose of Home Economics at The Master’s College is to build godly women?” “Yes, it is,” I replied. He probed further, “How many students do you have in the major?” “As you know, this is the first semester to offer Home Economics, and I have twenty women in our introductory character course.” “May I have a list of their names?” Working diligently to maintain a straight face, I replied, “I think if you observe the students carefully you will be able to identify them.” “You are telling me you won’t*



*give me their names?” was his response. “Yes, that would violate their privacy.” “Well, Dr. Ennis, I do understand, but you sure would save me a lot of time if you would just give me a list!” He thanked me for my time; as the door closed behind him, I thought, Now there is a young man who values a woman who embraces . . .*

PRINCIPLE ONE: THE PRINCIPLE OF VIRTUOUS

*An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.* (Proverbs 31:10 NASB)

Moral excellence, right actions, and thinking that is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, possessing virtue, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8–9) describe the *quality of being virtuous*. Virtue is an effective power that is to fill all the thoughts, actions, and relationships of our Wise Woman. When integrated into her life, this quality graciously generates power and demands respect.

Our Wise Woman establishes godly guidelines for living according to the Scriptures and determines, through the strength of the Holy Spirit, to abide by them (Philippians 4:13). The Old Testament book of Ruth describes such a woman. Ruth 3:11 is the only scriptural reference to a “virtuous” woman and explains that Boaz knew of Ruth because of her reputation for purity; in contrast, Rahab’s reputation as a harlot followed her throughout the Scriptures (Joshua 2:1; 6:17; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). Though God saved Rahab and by His grace allowed her to be included in the messianic line (Matthew 1:5), her reputation as a harlot lingered.

Our Wise Woman is a crown to her husband. A woman lacking in virtue causes him shame and produces suffering that is like a painful, incurable disease (Proverbs 12:4). A woman’s character prior to marriage determines her quality as a marital spouse—thus the importance of every Christian woman’s embracing virtue



at an early age. To live a life characterized by virtue should be the ambition of every Christian woman (Matthew 5:8).

PRINCIPLE TWO: THE PRINCIPLE OF TRUSTWORTHY

*The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.* (Proverbs 31:11–12 NASB)

The *quality of being trustworthy* is demonstrated by behaviors that lead to confidence in the honesty, integrity, reliability, justice, and loyalty of an individual. *Integrity*, the quality or state of being complete (Colossians 2:10), is demonstrated through how one handles *prosperity* because abundance tends to reveal our value system (1 Corinthians 10:1–10).

The character of our Wise Woman motivates her husband to respond with trust (Proverbs 31:11). This trustworthy lifestyle includes the nurturing of security, love, service, limits, freedom, enjoyment, faith, and encouragement. Her husband and those under her leadership are challenged to reach their full potential (Proverbs 18:22; 19:14). She understands that she has the ability to feed or starve their character and thus handles this privilege through the strength of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16–26).

Our Wise Woman can live in today's world with or without a husband. My life is an example of such a woman—I am a single woman who, in the words of John MacArthur, God has kept single to allow me to serve Him most effectively (1 Corinthians 7:1–8). I am an orphan, as well, with no earthly relatives—which frees me to serve my heavenly Father without encumbrances. As I implement Psalm 37:3–4; Proverbs 3:5–6; and Jeremiah 29:11–13, my trust in my heavenly Father affirms that He is a sun and shield; He gives grace and glory, and there is *no good thing* that He withholds from me if I walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11). I use this statement frequently when people



ask how I can know how to cook, sew, and maintain a well-managed home and not be married! If married, her husband's response to her character is trust. If unmarried, trustworthiness is the evaluation of those closest to her.

The fruit of trustworthiness is an understanding, encouraging, sympathetic, and tactful spirit. A trustworthy woman has the ability to retain another's confidence (Proverbs 10:19). As I counsel with women who experience difficulty in applying the *principle of trustworthiness* to their speech, I encourage them to say, "Stop, please do not tell me that—I am not trustworthy!" when someone begins to share information they know they cannot refrain from passing on. I find they do not need to repeat the phrase many times before their speech habits are corrected. Stability in her life, based upon a growing relationship with the Lord rather than circumstances (James 1:5–6), the ability to resist temptation, and dependability (1 Corinthians 10:12–13) describe the trustworthy woman.

#### PRINCIPLE THREE: THE PRINCIPLE OF ENERGETIC

*She looks for wool and flax, and works with her hands in delight. She is like merchant ships; she brings her food from afar. She rises also while it is still night and gives food to her household and portions to her maidens. She considers a field and buys it; from her earnings she plants a vineyard. . . . She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hands grasp the spindle. She extends her hand to the poor; And she stretches out her hands to the needy. . . . She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies belts to the tradesmen. . . . She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. (Proverbs 31:13–16, 19–20, 24, 27 NASB)*

Being *energetic* suggests strength or power efficiently exerted. A Wise Woman knows her assets and liabilities, develops her



talents, and is a worker, not a shirker. She works willingly with her hands (the word *hand* is used six times in the twenty-two verses of Proverbs 31:10–31) and sets an example for her children by her personal and physical involvement in the management of her home. The woman described in Proverbs 31 trained her servants and then supervised the tasks they performed. She was actively involved in her well-managed household (v. 27), fabric and garment construction (vv. 13, 24), trading in the marketplace (v. 24), and ministry to others (vv. 19–20).

Application to the twenty-first century finds our Wise Woman training her children and then supervising them to efficiently use their “electrical servants.” At the same time, she is involved in Christian services that complement those of her children, rather than neglecting them to perform “her ministries.” Because her role model is Christ (Philippians 2:5–11), who cares much more about those under Him than they care about Him, she is not easily discouraged if others do not compliment her endeavors.

#### PRINCIPLE FOUR: THE PRINCIPLE OF PHYSICALLY FIT

*She girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong.*  
(Proverbs 31:17 NASB)

*Physical fitness*, that is, being in good physical condition and healthy, is enthusiastically affirmed by many twenty-first-century women. The biblical application is defined by three words: *suitable*, *proper*, and *fit*; they describe our Wise Woman’s attitude toward the condition of her body. *Suitable* guides her in the selection of physical toning activities that prepare her to fulfill the demands of her life. *Proper* encourages her to select activities that are dictated by good judgment. *Fit* expands the definition to challenge her to possess the qualifications necessary to meet conditions, circumstances, purposes, or demands. Our Wise Woman described in Proverbs 31:17 is physically



fit because of the rigorous work she does to maintain a well-run home.

A study of body mechanics helps us understand that much of the movement associated with the care of the home tones the body comparably with hours spent at the gym. First Timothy 4:8 directs Wise Women to the truth that “bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things”; thus our Wise Woman will be more concerned about her character without neglecting her body tone (1 Peter 3:3–6). The guidelines that follow help our Wise Woman balance her physical and spiritual fitness.

- *She has a realistic attitude toward her personal capabilities.* God provides health boundaries to assist us in being sensible about the responsibilities we assume. Just because she can perform a skill does not mean that she should. Purposely pushing beyond safe health boundaries would be like jumping off a bridge and then praying on the way down that you won’t get hurt!
- *She acknowledges that her body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; it is her responsibility to make it a fit dwelling place for Him (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).* It is a sobering thought to acknowledge that the Holy Spirit will not empower a spiritually dirty vessel.
- *She realizes that she must be healthy to perform her duties efficiently.* Applying this guideline requires the freedom from all habits that would injure her physically, mentally, or spiritually (Romans 12:1–2).
- *She understands the importance of recreation to maintain a healthy body.* Mark 6:31 and Luke 9:10 describe our Lord’s sensitivity to his disciples’ need for rest and privacy from their demanding ministry. Our Wise Woman will adopt our Lord’s model.
- *She accepts the fact that sometimes “others can, she cannot.”* It is an exercise in futility to compare her capabilities with



those of others, since each woman is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14).

- *She has a clear perspective regarding her body cycling and wisely accommodates its ebb and flow.* The regular physical conditioning of our Wise Woman allows her to be involved in the lives of others. She balances the care of her home with the care of her body to avoid becoming a worried, frazzled, and defensive woman who sacrifices herself on the altar of domesticity or physical fitness.

#### PRINCIPLE FIVE: THE PRINCIPLE OF ECONOMICAL

*She senses that her gain is good, her lamp does not go out at night.* (Proverbs 31:18 NASB)

*Budget and diet*—two words that conjure up visions of economic and nutritional deprivation. Each word, however, has both a positive and negative definition. A budget can be established for either a high or a low income. A diet can constitute a high or a low daily caloric intake. The *quality of being economical* challenges our Wise Woman to refrain from wasting time, money, fuel, or any other resource. Application of the principle economical insures that she operates her home on a budget (a plan for spending) and that monthly it balances (not too much month at the end of the money).

The Wise Woman of Proverbs 31 perceives that her merchandise is good. As an accomplished seamstress and nutritionist, she recognizes quality. With practiced eye, she seeks out a bargain that reflects excellence. At the same time, her knowledge and skill allow her to make the best decision of whether to make the purchase, pay for the service, or personally perform the task.

Most twenty-first-century women can identify with their “lamp not going out at night” because of the impacted schedules they maintain. However, this verse does not suggest that



our Wise Woman deprives herself of sleep. Just as exercise contributes to a physically fit body, so sleep is necessary to a woman's mental, spiritual, and physical well-being.

Several characteristics describe our Wise Woman's attitude toward money and material possessions:

- *All resources are a gift from the Lord to be used carefully* (Deuteronomy 8:18; Acts 4:32–36; 1 Timothy 6:17–19).
- *God does not love the poor and hate the rich.* The Bible reports a number of godly individuals who were exceedingly wealthy—Job, Abraham, Joseph, David, Solomon, Josiah, Barnabas, Philemon, and Lydia—to name a few. He does, however, hate false gain (Proverbs 1:19), wrong motives for acquiring wealth (13:11), and a lack of compassionate generosity among the wealthy (14:20–21; 16:19).
- *There is wisdom in Proverbs 19:17, “One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord” (NASB).* The Wise Woman applies this truth to our life in her generosity to those in need.

Our Wise Woman possesses an attitude of contentment which corresponds with the New Testament teaching found in 1 Timothy 6:6–8: Godliness + contentment = great gain! Evidence that wealth is not the source of her contentment is found in her model of humility patterned after her Lord (Philippians 2:8; 1 Peter 5:5). She does not trust in her wealth for security (Psalm 20:7; Proverbs 11:28), and is a gracious (v. 16), generous woman (31:18).

#### PRINCIPLE SIX: THE PRINCIPLE OF UNSELFISH

*She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hands grasp the spindle. She extends her hand to the poor, and she stretches out her hands to the needy. (Proverbs 31:19–20 NASB)*



*Selfish* is an adjective our Wise Woman seeks to eliminate from the list of her character qualities. By definition, it means having such regard for one's own interests and advantage that the happiness and welfare of others become of little concern. Selfishness stems from pride and is first in the list of sins most hated by God (Proverbs 6:16–19); according to Scripture, selfishness is a sin.

The body of an ancient woman mummified by the volcanic ashes of Mount Vesuvius was unearthed when the Roman city of Pompeii was excavated. Her position told a tragic story of selfishness—her feet were pointed toward the city gate, but her outreached arms and fingers were straining for something that lay behind her. The treasure for which she was grasping was a bag of pearls. Of her it was written, “Though death was hard at her heels, and life was beckoning to her beyond the city gates, she could not shake off their spell . . . but it was not the eruption of Vesuvius that made her love pearls more than life. It only froze her in this attitude of greed.”<sup>5</sup>

Anything can fuel the flames of excessive desire and greed. If not checked, they can destroy women (Proverbs 1:19). The wealthy landowners in Isaiah's day acquired more and more houses and fields until they had a monopoly (Isaiah 5:8). But God said that they would become desolate and their lands would not produce (vv. 9–10). Wise is the woman who lives by the principle that if she is not satisfied with what she has, she will never be satisfied with what she wants.

Our Wise Woman's character is free from selfishness—she is not too busy with her own affairs to take time to assist others. The spindle and distaff—two flat, circular objects used to work textile fibers—were tools of the day. The Woman of Proverbs 31 used them to provide for her family, herself, and the less fortunate. That “she extends her hand to the poor” indicates her response to calls for help (Proverbs 31:20 NASB). Her response is both active and passive—she gives when she

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is asked and is sensitive to offer assistance when she is not asked. Our Wise Woman has a spiritual attitude toward helping—she is like Dorcas, who was “full of good works and charitable deeds which she did” (Acts 9:36).

Unselfishness is most clearly seen in our Wise Woman’s willingness to share her time with others; time is the most precious commodity we have and the highest compliment we pay to another when we unselfishly give it. As Wise Women we are not to favor certain people (James 2:1–13), but are to place before the Lord the requests of all who desire to benefit from our wisdom. Our attitude toward selfless living should mirror the contents of this poem:

*Lord help me live from day to day  
In such a self-forgetful way,  
That even when I kneel to pray  
My prayers will be for others.*

*Others, Lord, yes others,  
Let this my motto be;  
Help me to live for others,  
That I might live like Thee.*

—Author Unknown

PRINCIPLE SEVEN: THE PRINCIPLE OF PREPARED

*She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She makes a tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. . . . She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. (Proverbs 31:21–22, 27)*



*Putting events, objects, or people in order*, as well as *making suitable and receptive* are phrases that describe the *quality of preparedness in action*. Our Wise Woman demonstrates planning and foresight that equip her for unforeseen circumstances, rather than living from crisis to crisis. Besides being physically prepared, our Wise Woman knows the value of spiritual preparedness; she builds a financial reserve for financial challenges and a spiritual reserve for emotional challenges. The prophet Jeremiah refers to the person who “trusts in the Lord” as being prepared “like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit” (Jeremiah 17:7–8 NASB). The heat will come; the drought is certain; however, there is a lack of fear when one is prepared.

Her firm grip on scriptural priorities allows her to be prepared for the future. Charles Hummel, in his classic booklet *Tyranny of the Urgent*, urges his readers to evaluate their priorities daily:

Sometime ago, Simba bullets killed a young man, Dr. Paul Carlson. In the providence of God his life’s work was finished. Most of us will live longer and die more quietly, but when the end comes, what would give us greater joy than being sure that we have finished the work that *God* gave us to do? The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ makes this fulfillment possible. He has promised deliverance from sin and the power to serve God in the tasks of His choice. The way is clear. If we continue in the word of our Lord, we are truly his disciples. And he will free us from the tyranny of the urgent; free us to do the important, which is the will of God.<sup>6</sup>

The Wise Woman will refuse to allow the urgent to take the place of the important in her life.



PRINCIPLE EIGHT: THE PRINCIPLE OF HONORABLE

*Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future.* (Proverbs 31:25 NASB)

Being honorable is synonymous with having integrity and is seen in others' high regard or respect for our Wise Woman. She possesses a biblical sense of right or wrong, and her moral uprightness is apparent to all. As our Wise Woman applies the *quality of being honorable* to her life, others will note these honorable qualities.

- Her outer adorning complements her inward qualities (1 Peter 3:3–4).
- She abstains from every appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).
- She possesses strong convictions of right and wrong (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25; Matthew 7:13–14).
- Her convictions are based upon biblical principles (Psalm 119:11, 105) rather than cultural trends.

If married, the Wise Woman's high standards of behavior make a significant contribution to her husband's position (Proverbs 12:4; 18:22; 19:14; 31:23). She functions as a helpmeet (Genesis 2:18) and determines to never be an embarrassment or a hindrance to her husband. The conduct of Job's wife (Job 2:9) and Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39) stand in stark contrast to the behavior of the woman who chooses to live an honorable lifestyle.

Our Wise Woman acquires a stable, honest reputation. Strength and honor accompany her business practices (Proverbs 31:25). Desiring to walk worthy of her calling (Ephesians 4:1–2), she leads a life that brings glory to God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Humility, unselfishness, gentleness, mildness, patience,



bearing with others, and making allowances for others are characteristic of her godly behavior.

Our honorable woman has control of her body—it is presented as a living sacrifice to the Lord (Romans 12:1–2). She refuses to yield her body as an instrument to sin (Romans 6:12–13) and acknowledges that her body belongs to Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15). Realizing that her body is a temple literally inhabited by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:15), she chooses to glorify God in her body (1 Corinthians 6:20). She becomes a student of her body so that she knows how to control it in honor (1 Thessalonians 4:4) and understands the need for accountability to the body of Christ to maintain her purity (Galatians 6:1–2; James 5:19–20).

#### PRINCIPLE NINE: THE PRINCIPLE OF PRUDENT

*She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.* (Proverbs 31:26 NASB)

Mothers frequently remind their children, “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything!” James 3:2, 5 teaches that “if anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. . . . Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!” The *quality of being prudent*, implying wisdom and careful consideration of consequences, especially applies to the use of our tongue. Miriam, Moses’ sister (Numbers 12:1–15), serves as a graphic illustration of the impact of a sharp, complaining tongue. The entire nation of Israel was delayed for seven days because she chose to use her tongue the wrong way.

Our Wise Woman’s speech exhibits good judgment and discretion (Colossians 4:6). Rather than being too aggressive or bossy, gentleness (Proverbs 15:1) and compassion characterize her words (Ecclesiastes 10:12–14). She possesses the ability to be kind, yet very firm, as well as the ability to maintain con-



fidences—remember the question we asked about our speech when we explored the *principle of trustworthy?* (Ecclesiastes 5:2). Truthfulness is evident in her relationships with others (Ephesians 4:15), and she realizes that what she meditates upon will emerge in her speech (Psalm 19:14; Luke 6:45). Within her family relationships, she refuses to discredit her husband’s character and speaks with firmness, balanced with kindness and gentleness, when disciplining her children. Desiring the description “she opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness” (Proverbs 31:26) to characterize her conversations, before speaking she asks . . .

- Is it kind?
- Is it necessary?
- Is it true?
- Is it gossip (sharing private information with those who are not a part of the solution)?
- Am I defending my own opinion rather than listening to the individual?

I recall finishing a class session with these questions one Friday afternoon. As I closed in prayer I asked my heavenly Father to remind everyone in the class, including the professor, to put their conversations during the weekend through the grid of the five questions.

When I returned to class on Monday, I noticed that Melaine, a generally gregarious young woman, was glumly slumped in a chair in the back row of the classroom. I approached her and inquired, “Melaine, is there something the matter?” She responded, “Yes, there is. You ruined my weekend!” Since a major assignment was not due that day, I was curious as to how I so negatively impacted her weekend. “Could you share with me how I ruined your weekend?” “Well, you know how I *love* to talk—but since I asked myself your five questions before speak-



ing, I found that I did not have much to say. That’s how you ruined my weekend!” I finished our conversation by affirming my pleasure in her choosing to apply what I was teaching her—she simply sighed as I walked to the front of the classroom.

Having implemented these standards for her speech, our Wise Woman chooses to make encouragement a part of her lifestyle because it is a spiritual concept (Hebrews 10:25). The act of encouragement inspires others with renewed courage, spirit, and hope. It affirms individuals for who they are rather than what they do. Proverbs 25:11 teaches us the value of appropriate words. A number of actions can provide encouragement to others:

- Bestowing notes and small gifts at unexpected times
- Commenting on desirable character qualities (for example, punctuality or a good attitude)
- Calling with specific, encouragement-oriented purposes
- Complimenting a job well done
- Supporting someone who is hurting
- Choosing to use confrontation in the appropriate manner (Matthew 18:15–19) rather than as a Christian way of “telling someone off”

Our Wise Woman cultivates a positive, reassuring attitude, knowing that encouragement does not thrive in a negative atmosphere. She realizes that developing the attribute takes time and does not anticipate repayment (Luke 6:30–31; 1 Timothy 6:17–19).

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PRINCIPLE TEN: THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVABLE

*Her children rise up and bless her, her husband also, and he praises her, saying: “Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all.” (Proverbs 31:28–29 NASB)*

The sense of kindness and generosity we should possess for others; an intense love for others, including one’s husband, children, friends, and relations; and a steadfast commitment to our heavenly Father describe our Wise Woman. She displays a strong liking for others and chooses to apply the Titus 2:3–5 principle of the younger women learning from the older women in her life. Our Wise Woman is approachable by others and resists the temptation to be a “respector of persons” (Acts 10:34 KJV; see James 2:1–13).

The portrait of our dear woman described in Proverbs 31:10–31 showed that she concentrated her domestic efforts on her family and can be seen in their evaluation of her. Her husband and children spontaneously cheer her on (Proverbs 31:27–29). Every day, when they open their eyes, they rejoice that she belongs to them. She chooses to live a consistent life as a wife and mother as this adaptation of 1 Corinthians 13 by Dianne Lorang suggests:

THE LOVE CHAPTER FOR MOTHERS

If I talk to my children about what is right and what is wrong, but I have not love, I am like a ringing doorbell or pots banging in the kitchen. And though I know what stages they will go through, and understand their growing pains, and can answer all their questions about life, and believe myself to be a devoted mother, but I have not love, I have nothing.

If I give up the fulfillment of a career to make my children’s lives better, and stay up all night sewing costumes or baking cookies



at short notice, but grumble about lack of sleep, I have not love and accomplish nothing.

A loving mother is patient with her children's immaturity and kind even when they are not; a loving mother is not jealous of their youth nor does she hold it over their heads whenever she has sacrificed for them.

A loving mother believes in her children; she hopes in each one's individual ability to stand out as a light in a dark world; she endures every backache and heartache to accomplish that.

A loving mother never really dies. As for home-baked bread, it will be consumed and forgotten: as for spotless floors, they will soon gather dust and heel marks. As for children, right now toys, friends and food are all-important to them. But when they grow up, it will be their mother's love that they will remember and pass on to others. In that way, she will live on.

So care, training and a loving mother reside in a home, these three, but the greatest of these is a loving mother.<sup>7</sup>

Having made her home her first priority, our Wise Woman works creatively with her husband (Amos 3:3; Ephesians 5:22–24; Colossians 3:8–4:1; 1 Peter 3:1–6). She knows him well enough to respect and honor him (Ephesians 5:33), as well as to be his helpmate and friend (Genesis 2:18). Training her children well by practicing child-rearing principles based on the Word of God (Deuteronomy 6:6–7; 11:18–32; Psalm 78:1–4; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21; 2 Timothy 3:14–17) is the focus of her life while her children are at home. An unidentified author paints a vivid picture of the importance of this training process:

*Plastic Clay*

*I took a piece of plastic clay*

*And idly fashioned it one day.*

THE WISE WOMAN  
BUILDS HER HOME



*And as my fingers pressed it still,  
It moved and yielded to my will.*

*I came again when days were past—  
The bit of clay was hard at last.*

*The form I gave it, it still bore,  
But I could not change that form no more.*

*I took a piece of living clay  
And gently formed it day by day,  
And molded it with my power and art,  
A young child's soft and yielding heart.*

*I came again when years were gone—  
It was a man I looked upon;  
He still that early impress wore,  
And I could change him nevermore.*

Finally, she sets an example for the character qualities she wishes to instill in the lives of her children, realizing that they absorb the behaviors she models (1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:1–2).

As a spiritual mentor, I am faced with the same decisions as a mother in discerning my level of involvement in professional and ministry opportunities. I chose, on numerous occasions, to decline professional and ministry invitations to be available to the young women God gave me to mentor at both Christian Heritage and The Master's College. The limited time I have for writing is primarily focused on the yearly newsletters I prepare for my students, alumni, and other individuals interested



in Home Economics from a Christian perspective. Recently I received the following note from one of my graduates in response to a newsletter:

Dear Dr. E.,

Thanks for putting the newsletter together and sending edifying materials again this year. It is such a blessing. Thanks for fighting the good fight with endurance and continuing to build up those of us who have children ahead of careers. In today's world we have made all the "wrong" choices. But in the kingdom of God, we are doing right. You continue to support this by your very edifying classes in Home Economics and newsletters. I thank God for you, Dr. E.!!

Christine

Christine's unsolicited response reminded me that the most meaningful affirmation a Christian woman can receive is from those who know her best!

#### PRINCIPLE ELEVEN: THE PRINCIPLE OF GOD-FEARING

*Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.* (Proverbs 31:30 NASB)

*Fearing God* means a reverential trust in God, including the hatred of evil. Romans 12:9 challenges our Wise Woman: "Abhor what is evil. Cling to that which is good." The Wise Woman develops values that are based on the Word of God. As she lives out the *principle of God-fearing*, she will honor, respect, worship, and love her Lord with all her heart (Matthew 22:37). There are many practical applications of this godly lifestyle:

- An individual hunger and thirst after God (Psalm 42:1–2)
- A willingness to possess an attitude of submission to God's will and ways (James 4:7)



- A consistent evaluation of her spiritual condition (1 Corinthians 11:31–32)
- A determination to make spiritual principles a priority (Matthew 6:33)
- A refusal to slump into a monotonous devotion routine
- A focus on the strength found in the joy of the Lord (Nehemiah 8:10b)

Exercising 1 Corinthians 10 as a warning, our Wise Woman acknowledges the traps that the ancient Hebrews fell into regarding their spiritual condition:

- They craved evil things (v. 6).
- They were idolatrous (v. 7).
- They began practicing immorality (v. 8).
- They took God's goodness for granted (v. 9).
- They became cynical and negative (v. 10).

In the midst of God's best blessings, they became cool, distant, and indifferent—not suddenly, but slowly, the keen edge of enthusiasm became dull. Applying the wisdom of 1 Corinthians 10:12–13, the Wise Woman is careful to learn from the example of the disobedient and indolent Jews in Moses' time.

#### THE REWARD

*Strength and dignity are her clothing,  
And she smiles at the future. . . .  
Give her the product of her hands.  
And let her works praise her in the gates.*

PROVERBS 31:25, 31 NASB

The reward of cultivating these eleven principles is presented in Proverbs 31:31 as our Wise Woman receives her rewards “in the gates,” or the public assembly of people. She is often rewarded in this life and always in the hereafter (1 Corinthians



3:10–15, 4:1–51; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 22:12). A review of these qualities of the Wise Woman bring to mind the earthly rewards that she might receive:

#### VIRTUOUS

- An unobstructed relationship with her heavenly Father (Matthew 5:8).
- Blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of her salvation (Psalm 24:1–5).
- The assurance that her influence will never die (Proverbs 31:28; 2 Timothy 1:3–7).

#### TRUSTWORTHY

- Her husband trusts her (Proverbs 31:11).
- She has an honorable reputation (Proverbs 31:25).
- She has the confidence that as she walks uprightly her heavenly Father will provide grace, glory, and all the things that are good for her (Psalm 84:11).

#### ENERGETIC

- Her family benefits from her business endeavors (Proverbs 31:24).
- She enjoys professional and spiritual stimulation (Proverbs 27:17).
- She is exempt from reaping the fruit of slothfulness (Proverbs 19:15).

#### PHYSICALLY FIT

- She enjoys the tasks she undertakes to their fullest potential (Colossians 3:23).