

The Book of Proverbs

Chapter 31

Counsel from King Lemuel's Mother

The words of King Lemuel are recorded, concerning what his mother taught him on how to be a king.

This is a wonderful description of a virtuous woman.

Many feel this is King Lemuel's description of his own mother.

It sets forth marvelously the strength and glory and beauty of womanhood and the unique contribution that women can make to life.

Proverbs 31:1

(Pro 31:1 ISV*) ¶ The words of King Lemuel — a pronouncement with which his mother encouraged him.

(Pro 31:1 KJV+) The words^{H1697} of king^{H4428} Lemuel,^{H3927} the prophecy^{H4853} that^{H834} his mother^{H517} taught^{H3256} him.

(Pro 31:1 NASB) The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him:

(Pro 31:1 NIV) The sayings of King Lemuel—an oracle his mother taught him:

Who Lemuel and his mother were is not known.

The prophecy is a second supplement to the book of Proverbs.

Prov 30 was uttered by a man (**Prov 30:1**), and Prov 31 by a woman (**Prov 31:1-2**).

Proverbs 31:2

(Pro 31:2 ISV*) ¶ No, [Or What] my son! No, [Or What] my son whom I conceived! [Lit. son of my womb?] No, [Or What] my son to whom I gave birth! [Lit. son of my vows]

(Pro 31:2 KJV+) What,^{H4100} my son?^{H1248} and what,^{H4100} the son^{H1248} of my womb?^{H990} and what,^{H4100} the son^{H1248} of my vows?^{H5088}

(Pro 31:2 NASB) What, O my son? And what, O son of my womb? And what, O son of my vows?

(Pro 31:2 NIV) "O my son, O son of my womb, O son of my vows,

Questions 46-48. Next, **Prov 31:10**.

Proverbs 31:3

(Pro 31:3 ISV*) ¶ Never devote all your energy to sex, [Lit. women] or dedicate your life [Lit. ways] to destroying kings.

(Pro 31:3 KJV+) Give^{H5414} not^{H408} thy strength^{H2428} unto women,^{H802} nor thy ways^{H1870} to that which destroyeth^{H4229} kings.^{H4428}

(Pro 31:3 NASB) Do not give your strength to women, Or your ways to that which destroys kings.

(Pro 31:3 NIV) do not spend your strength on women, your vigor on those who ruin kings.

Six Commands to King Lemuel

1. Do not be a whoremonger (**Prov 31:3**).
2. Do not be a drunkard (**Prov 31:3**).
Four reasons given for this:
 - (1) It is not becoming to kings (**Prov 31:4**).
 - (2) It is not becoming to princes.
 - (3) Lest they forget God's law (**Prov 31:5**).
 - (4) Lest they pervert justice.
3. Give strong drink to the criminal ready to be executed or to one in suffering to relieve him and make him insensible to his pain (**Prov 31:6**).

This is what was offered the Lord, but He refused it (**Ps 69:21; Matt 27:34**).

It was a custom to give strong drink to condemned men to relieve their suffering in dying (**cp. Job 29:13**).

It was also used in surgery before modern anesthetics. 5

Six Commands to King Lemuel

4. Help such as are unable to plead their own cause in court (**Prov 31:8; cp. Job 29:15-16**).
5. Judge righteous judgment (**Prov 31:9**).
6. Plead the cause of the poor (**Prov 31:9**).

Proverbs 31:4

(Pro 31:4 ISV*) ¶ It is not for kings, Lemuel — Not for kings to drink wine or for rulers to desire liquor.

(Pro 31:4 KJV+) It is not^{H408} for kings,^{H4428} O Lemuel,^{H3927} it is not^{H408} for kings^{H4428} to drink^{H8354} wine;^{H3196} nor^{H176} for princes^{H7336} strong drink:^{H7941}

(Pro 31:4 NASB) It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Or for rulers to desire strong drink,

(Pro 31:4 NIV) "It is not for kings, O Lemuel— not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer,

Proverbs 31:5

(Pro 31:5 ISV*) ¶ Otherwise, they may drink and forget what has been ordained, perverting justice for all the oppressed.

(Pro 31:5 KJV+) Lest^{H6435} they drink,^{H8354} and forget^{H7911} the law,^{H2710} and pervert^{H8138} the judgment^{H1779} of any^{H3605} of the afflicted.^{H1121 H6040}

(Pro 31:5 NASB) For they will drink and forget what is decreed, And pervert the rights of all the afflicted.

(Pro 31:5 NIV) lest they drink and forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.

Proverbs 31:6

(Pro 31:6 ISV*) ¶ Give liquor to someone who is perishing,
and wine to someone who is deeply depressed. [Lit. one whose soul is bitter]

(Pro 31:6 KJV+) Give^{H5414} strong drink^{H7941} unto him that is ready to perish,^{H6} and wine^{H3196} unto those that be of heavy^{H4751} hearts.^{H5315}

(Pro 31:6 NASB) Give strong drink to him who is perishing, And wine to him whose life is bitter.

(Pro 31:6 NIV) Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish;

Proverbs 31:7

(Pro 31:7 ISV*) ¶ Let him drink, forget his poverty, and remember his troubles no more.

(Pro 31:7 KJV+) Let him drink,^{H8354} and forget^{H7911} his poverty,^{H7389} and remember^{H2142} his misery^{H5999} no^{H3808} more.^{H5750}

(Pro 31:7 NASB) Let him drink and forget his poverty And remember his trouble no more.

(Pro 31:7 NIV) let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more.

Proverbs 31:8

(Pro 31:8 ISV*) ¶ Speak for those who cannot speak; seek justice for all those on the verge of destruction. [Lit. all sons of destruction]

(Pro 31:8 KJV+) Open^{H6605} thy mouth^{H6310} for the dumb^{H483} in^{H413} the cause^{H1779} of all^{H3605} such as are appointed^{H1121} to destruction.^{H2475}

(Pro 31:8 NASB) Open your mouth for the mute, For the rights of all the unfortunate.

(Pro 31:8 NIV) "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.

Proverbs 31:9

(Pro 31:9 ISV*) ¶ Speak up, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and oppressed.

(Pro 31:9 KJV+) Open^{H6605} thy mouth,^{H6310} judge^{H8199} righteously,^{H6664} and plead the cause^{H1777} of the poor^{H6041} and needy.^{H34}

(Pro 31:9 NASB) Open your mouth, judge righteously, And defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.

(Pro 31:9 NIV) Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Proverbs 31:10

The Honorable Woman

(Pro 31:10 ISV*) ¶ Who can find a capable wife? Her value far exceeds the finest jewels.

(Pro 31:10 KJV+) Who^{H4310} can find^{H4672} a virtuous^{H2428} woman? ^{H802} for her price^{H4377} is far^{H7350} above rubies.^{H4480 H6443}

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

(Pro 31:10 NIV) A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.

Question 49. The last question in Proverbs.

Verses 10-31 make an acrostic:

Each begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

The same is true of **Ps 9; 10; 25; 34; 119, and Lam 1:4.**

[virtuous] Hebrew: **chayil** (OT:2428), strong in all moral and mental qualities (**Prov 31:10; 12:4; Ruth 3:11**).

Ruth is the only woman so-called.

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Thirty-one Characteristics of a Virtuous Woman

17. Refined in taste (**Prov 31:22**)
18. Respected — popular (**Prov 31:23**)
19. Industrious — prosperous (**Prov 31:24**)
20. Dependable — honest (**Prov 31:25**)
21. Confident — hopeful (**Prov 31:25**)
22. Wise — discreet (**Prov 31:26**)
23. Kind — understanding (**Prov 31:26**)
24. Prudent — practical (**Prov 31:27**)
25. Energetic — ever active (**Prov 31:27**)
26. An ideal wife and mother (**Prov 31:28**)
27. Honored by her family (**Prov 31:27-28**)
28. Excels in virtue (**Prov 31:28**)
29. God-fearing — humble (**Prov 31:30**)
30. Deserving — successful (**Prov 31:31**)
31. Honored by the public (**Prov 31:31**)

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Thirty-one Characteristics of a Virtuous Woman

1. Morally perfect (complete) (**Prov 31:10**)
2. Invaluable (**Prov 31:10**)
3. Trustworthy (**Prov 31:11**)
4. Inherently good and true (**Prov 31:12**)
5. Ingenious — proficient (**Prov 31:13**)
6. Thrifty — laborious (**Prov 31:14**)
7. Dutiful — considerate (**Prov 31:15**)
8. Versatile — judicious (**Prov 31:16**)
9. Tireless — healthy (**Prov 31:17**)
10. Joyful — efficient (**Prov 31:18**)
11. Watchful — cautious (**Prov 31:18**)
12. Thrifty — skillful (**Prov 31:19**)
13. Charitable — benevolent (**Prov 31:20**)
14. Generous — merciful (**Prov 31:20**)
15. Fearless — provident (**Prov 31:21**)
16. Clever at decorating — furnishing (**Prov 31:22**)

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Proverbs 31:11

(Pro 31:11 ISV*) ¶ Her husband has full confidence in her; as a result, he lacks nothing of value.

(Pro 31:11 KJV+) The heart^{H3820} of her husband^{H1167} doth safely trust^{H982} in her, so that he shall have no^{H3808} need^{H2637} of spoil.^{H7998}

(Pro 31:11 NASB) The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain.

(Pro 31:11 NIV) Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.

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Proverbs 31:11

(Pro 31:11 NASB) The heart of her husband trusts in her,
And he will have no lack of gain.

Five things said of her husband:

1. He has absolute confidence in her faithfulness (*Prv 31:11*).
2. He knows she will not be a waster, so has no need for his neighbor's goods to supply his house (*Prv 31:11*).
3. He is blessed by her tireless industry all the days of his life (*Prv 31:12*).
4. He is exalted as a ruler with the elders at the gate (*Prv 31:23*).
5. He praises her virtues and blessings to others (*Prv 31:28*).

Proverbs 31:12

(Pro 31:12 ISV*) ¶ She will bring good to him—never evil
— every day of her life.

(Pro 31:12 KJV+) She will do^{H1580} him good^{H2896} and
not^{H3808} evil^{H7451} all^{H3605} the days^{H3117} of her life.^{H2416}

(Pro 31:12 NASB) She does him good and not evil All
the days of her life.

(Pro 31:12 NIV) She brings him good, not harm, all the
days of her life.

Proverbs 31:13

(Pro 31:13 ISV*) ¶ She seeks out wool and flax, working
with eager hands.

(Pro 31:13 KJV+) She seeketh^{H1875} wool,^{H6785} and
flax,^{H6593} and worketh^{H6213} willingly^{H2656} with her
hands.^{H3709}

(Pro 31:13 NASB) She looks for wool and flax And works
with her hands in delight.

(Pro 31:13 NIV) She selects wool and flax and works
with eager hands.

She does not buy ready-woven cloth, but spins her own
raw materials from her own flocks.
She works for others willingly and cheerfully from the heart.

Proverbs 31:14

(Pro 31:14 ISV*) ¶ She is like a seagoing ship that brings
her food from far away.

(Pro 31:14 KJV+) She is^{H1961} like the merchants^{H5503}
ships;^{H591} she bringeth^{H935} her food^{H3899} from afar.^{H4480}
^{H4801}

(Pro 31:14 NASB) She is like merchant ships; She
brings her food from afar.

(Pro 31:14 NIV) She is like the merchant ships, bringing
her food from afar.

She imports and exports. If she buys anything she sells a
sufficient amount of things she has made to pay for it (*Prov*
31:14,16,18,24).

Proverbs 31:15

(Pro 31:15 ISV*) ¶ She rises while it is still night, preparing meals for her family and providing for her women servants.

(Pro 31:15 KJV+) She riseth^{H6965} also while it is yet^{H5750} night,^{H3915} and giveth^{H5414} meat^{H2964} to her household,^{H1004} and a portion^{H2706} to her maidens.^{H5291}

(Pro 31:15 NASB) She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens.

(Pro 31:15 NIV) She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls.

She is loving and considerate of all her household.

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Proverbs 31:17

(Pro 31:17 ISV*) ¶ She clothes herself with fortitude, and fortifies her arms with strength.

(Pro 31:17 KJV+) She girdeth^{H2296} her loins^{H4975} with strength,^{H5797} and strengtheneth^{H553} her arms.^{H2220}

(Pro 31:17 NASB) She girds herself with strength And makes her arms strong.

(Pro 31:17 NIV) She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.

She keeps herself and family in perfect health with proper food and clothing (*Prov 31:17,19,21*).

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Proverbs 31:16

(Pro 31:16 ISV*) ¶ She evaluates a field and purchases it; from the proceeds she plants a vineyard.

(Pro 31:16 KJV+) She considereth^{H2161} a field,^{H7704} and buyeth^{H3947} it: with the fruit^{H4480} ^{H6529} of her hands^{H3709} she planteth^{H5193} a vineyard.^{H3754}

(Pro 31:16 NASB) She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard.

(Pro 31:16 NIV) She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

She is not afraid to venture into new business to provide for her growing family (*Prov 31:16,28*).

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Proverbs 31:18

(Pro 31:18 ISV*) ¶ She is confident that her profits are sufficient. Her lamp does not go out at night.

(Pro 31:18 KJV+) She perceiveth^{H2938} that^{H3588} her merchandise^{H5504} is good:^{H2896} her candle^{H5216} goeth not out^{H3808} ^{H3518} by night.^{H3915}

(Pro 31:18 NASB) She senses that her gain is good; Her lamp does not go out at night.

(Pro 31:18 NIV) She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.

She is honest and upright in all her business dealings and not doubtful regarding the sale of her merchandise (*Prov 31:18-19,24*).

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Proverbs 31:19

(Pro 31:19 ISV*) ¶ She works with her own hands on her clothes [Lit. staff] — her hands work the sewing spindle.

(Pro 31:19 KJV+) She layeth^{H7971} her hands^{H3027} to the spindle,^{H3601} and her hands^{H3709} hold^{H8551} the distaff.^{H6418}

(Pro 31:19 NASB) She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hands grasp the spindle.

(Pro 31:19 NIV) In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.

The distaff on which the wool or flax was rolled and the spindle that twisted the wool into thread were ancient parts of the spinning wheel.

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Proverbs 31:20

(Pro 31:20 ISV*) ¶ She reaches out to the poor, opening her hands to those in need.

(Pro 31:20 KJV+) She stretcheth out^{H6566} her hand^{H3709} to the poor;^{H6041} yea, she reacheth forth^{H7971} her hands^{H3027} to the needy.^{H34}

(Pro 31:20 NASB) She extends her hand to the poor, And she stretches out her hands to the needy.

(Pro 31:20 NIV) She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.

She respects and loves both God and the poor, and is good to all in need (**Prov 31:20,30**).

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Proverbs 31:21

(Pro 31:21 ISV*) ¶ She is unafraid of winter's effect on [Lit. of the snow for] her household, because all of them are warmly clothed. [Lit. are clothed in red]

(Pro 31:21 KJV+) She is not^{H3808} afraid^{H3372} of the snow^{H4480} ^{H7950} for her household:^{H1004} for^{H3588} all^{H3605} her household^{H1004} are clothed^{H3847} with scarlet.^{H8144}

(Pro 31:21 NASB) She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet.

(Pro 31:21 NIV) When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.

She is not anxious about the health and comfort of her family in the winter, for she has fully provided all that is necessary for their protection.

They are sensible enough to protect themselves with what she has provided.

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Proverbs 31:22

(Pro 31:22 ISV*) ¶ She creates her own bedding, using fine linen and violet cloth.

(Pro 31:22 KJV+) She maketh^{H6213} herself coverings of tapestry,^{H4765} her clothing^{H3830} is silk^{H8336} and purple.^{H713}

(Pro 31:22 NASB) She makes coverings for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple.

(Pro 31:22 NIV) She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.

She has coverings, carpetings, and furnishings fit for her station in life.

Her clothing shows marks of refinement and luxury.

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Proverbs 31:23

(Pro 31:23 ISV*) ¶ Her husband is well known; [Lit. is known in the gates] he sits among the leaders of the land.

(Pro 31:23 KJV+) Her husband^{H1167} is known^{H3045} in the gates,^{H8179} when he sitteth^{H3427} among^{H5973} the elders^{H2205} of the land.^{H776}

(Pro 31:23 NASB) Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land.

(Pro 31:23 NIV) Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.

Her husband is known and respected in public and has a place of authority among the elders of the land.

He is respected not only for his position, but because he is the husband of a woman justly held in universal esteem.

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Proverbs 31:25

(Pro 31:25 ISV*) ¶ Strength and dignity are her garments; she smiles about the future.

(Pro 31:25 KJV+) Strength^{H5797} and honour^{H1926} are her clothing;^{H3830} and she shall rejoice^{H7832} in time^{H3117} to come.^{H314}

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

(Pro 31:25 NIV) She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.

All the things she makes are perfect, strong, elegant, and satisfactory to the merchants and the trade.

She has no occasion to blush over anything she has made.

She has no fear that any article will be returned as inferior to accepted standards of trade.

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Proverbs 31:24

(Pro 31:24 ISV*) ¶ She designs and sells linen garments, supplying accessories [Or belts] to clothiers.

(Pro 31:24 KJV+) She maketh^{H6213} fine linen,^{H5466} and selleth^{H4376} it; and delivereth^{H5414} girdles^{H2289} unto the merchant.^{H3669}

(Pro 31:24 NASB) She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies belts to the tradesmen.

(Pro 31:24 NIV) She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.

She manufactures articles in demand.

Perhaps they included the beautiful oriental dresses, girdles, turbans, towels, linens, and other fine articles of clothing.

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Proverbs 31:26

(Pro 31:26 ISV*) ¶ She speaks wisely, teaching with gracious love.

(Pro 31:26 KJV+) She openeth^{H6605} her mouth^{H6310} with wisdom;^{H2451} and in^{H5921} her tongue^{H3956} is the law^{H8451} of kindness.^{H2617}

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

(Pro 31:26 NIV) She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

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Proverbs 31:26

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

She opens her mouth and speaks wisdom.

Kindness is the grace of her lips.

She is wise and intelligent and highly cultured in mind and manners.

She is graceful and even-tempered in all her ways.

There are few managing women who are not lords over their husbands, tyrants over their servants, and haughty toward their neighbors.

She is an excellent example of a meek and quiet spirit (**1 Peter 3:1-8**).

Proverbs 31:27

(Pro 31:27 NASB) She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness.

She manages her household with economy and discretion. Her children behave well and none keep company with persons of unclean and immoral habits.

She instructs her house in practical religion and industry and gives them an example of godliness, diligence in business, and untiring improvement of mind, soul, and body.

Knowing that idleness leads to vice, she sees that everyone has his own work to perform, and his proper share in food, raiment, and other necessities befitting such a household in society.

Proverbs 31:27

(Pro 31:27 ISV*) ¶ She looks discretely to the affairs of her household, and she is never lazy. [Lit. she does not eat the food of laziness]

(Pro 31:27 KJV+) She looketh well^{H6822} to the ways^{H1979} of her household,^{H1004} and eateth^{H398} not^{H3808} the bread^{H3899} of idleness.^{H6104}

(Pro 31:27 NASB) She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness.

(Pro 31:27 NIV) She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Proverbs 31:28

(Pro 31:28 ISV*) ¶ Her children stand up and encourage her, as does her husband, who praises her:

(Pro 31:28 KJV+) Her children^{H1121} arise up,^{H6965} and call her blessed;^{H833} her husband^{H1167} also, and he praiseth^{H1984} her.

(Pro 31:28 NASB) Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying:

(Pro 31:28 NIV) Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

She sees to it that a good education comes next to divine experiences and leads her household to God and His ways.

Her children are well trained and rise up to call her blessed (**Prov 31:28-30**).

Proverbs 31:29

(Pro 31:29 ISV*) ¶ “Many women have done wonderful things,” he says, [The Heb. lacks he says] “but you surpass all of them!”

(Pro 31:29 KJV+) Many^{H7227} daughters^{H1323} have done^{H6213} virtuously,^{H2428} but thou^{H859} excellest^{H5927 H5921} them all.^{H3605}

(Pro 31:29 NASB) "Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all."

(Pro 31:29 NIV) "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all."

She excels all other women as a wife and mother, and in religion and industry (*Prov 31:29-30*).

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Proverbs 31:31

(Pro 31:31 ISV*) ¶ Reward her for her work - let her actions result in public praise. [Lit. in praise in the gates]

(Pro 31:31 KJV+) Give^{H5414} her of the fruit^{H4480 H6529} of her hands;^{H3027} and let her own works^{H4639} praise^{H1984} her in the gates.^{H8179}

(Pro 31:31 NASB) Give her the product of her hands, And let her works praise her in the gates.

(Pro 31:31 NIV) Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

Give such a woman public praise and acclaim, and give her the fruit of her hands.

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Proverbs 31:30

(Pro 31:30 ISV*) ¶ Charm is deceitful and beauty fades; but a woman who fears the LORD will be praised.

(Pro 31:30 KJV+) Favour^{H2580} is deceitful,^{H8267} and beauty^{H3308} is vain:^{H1892} but a woman^{H802} that feareth^{H3373} the LORD,^{H3068} she^{H1931} shall be praised.^{H1984}

(Pro 31:30 NASB) Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

(Pro 31:30 NIV) Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

Grace of manner is deceitful and beauty of form and features will fade, but the woman who fears the Lord shall be praised.

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