

BECOMING A P-31
Proverbs 31:10-31
By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The title of this sermon is “Becoming a P-31.”
2. Pastor Tommy Nelson was on a ministry trip with a couple of younger men in the church who were still single, and he overheard them talking about trying to find a P-31. “What’s a P-31?” he asked. They replied, “A P-31 is a Proverbs 31 woman.”
3. In Proverbs 31:10-31 we find a picture of the ideal woman; what every Christian woman should aspire to be.
4. What is biblical womanhood? What is biblical femininity? This chapter answers that question.

II. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1. It was written 3,000 years ago.
2. This passage is a poem.
3. An acrostic. Every verse begins with a successive letter in the Hebrew alphabet. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and there are 22 verses in this poem.
4. The acrostic was used for retention, and as a way of saying this is what an excellent woman is like, from A to Z. It is meant to be a comprehensive treatment on the subject.
5. The KJV Study Bible says it might well be called “22 points about the excellent wife,” or “the perfect wife from A to Z.”
6. The ESV Study Bible calls it the alphabet of womanly excellence.
7. This poem was written by a woman; the mother of King Lemuel. Her purpose was to teach her son how to choose a worthy wife. This section of scripture is not just for women to emulate, but for young men to learn what to look for in a wife.
8. Keep in mind that the Proverbs 31 woman is not a real woman. It is the ideal woman. The perfect woman. The woman with no flaws; the woman who has it all figured out. Do not feel like a failure if you cannot achieve her level of excellence. Nobody can. The point is to give women an ideal to strive for.

III. **TEXT:** Proverbs 31:10-31

IV. ELEVEN VIRTUES OF A P-31

1. **A P-31 is trustworthy to her husband.**
 - i. **Proverbs 31:11** “The heart of her husband trusts in her.”
 - ii. She is honest, truthful, faithful.
 - iii. Her husband trusts her sexually. He has no fear of her being unfaithful.
 - iv. Her husband trusts her financially. He can share a bank account with her. He can give her a credit card.
 - v. Her husband trusts her verbally.
 1. She does not lie.
 2. She does not bad-mouth him to others.
 3. She keeps her word.
 4. She keeps a secret.

- vi. **John Angell James, (1785—1859)** “Confidence between man and wife is the basis of domestic happiness. There cannot possibly be happiness where this is lacking. Suspicion and jealousy must drive felicity out of doors.”
- 2. A P-31 takes good care of her husband.**
- i. **Proverbs 31:11-12** ““And he will not lack anything good. She rewards him with good, not evil, all the days of her life.”
 - ii. **Proverbs 31:28** “her husband also praises her.”
 - iii. **George Lawson, 1821** “He cannot refrain from bestowing praise on the one whom he finds the sweetener of all his cares, his faithful advisor in perplexities, his comforter in every distress, the instrument of a great part of his earthly felicity, his best friend, his unceasing joy, and his brightest crown.”
 - iv. After God, her husband comes first.
 - v. Every Christian has the same priorities: 1) Spiritual. 2) Spouse. 3) Seed. 4) Self.
 - vi. A P-31 is devoted to pleasing her husband.
 - 1. Every man has the same top five emotional needs: Sexual fulfillment; recreational companionship; an attractive spouse; domestic support; admiration.
 - 2. A man’s greatest desire is his wife’s happiness. Do have live with a cheerful, positive attitude and countenance? An unhappy wife makes a man feel like a total failure.
 - 3. A man’s greatest need – respect – in word, body language, and action.
 - a. **Ephesians 5:33** “To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband.”
 - b. Did you know that the song “Respect” by Aretha Franklin was actually written by a man from the perspective of a man talking to a woman?
 - c. The better you meet a man’s need for respect, the easier it will be for him to love you.
 - vii. iv. A P-31 is devoted to making her husband more successful.
 - 1. She increases her husband’s power and influence. **Proverbs 31:23** “Her husband is known at the city gates, where he sits among the elders of the land.”
 - a. There were rooms, often in the city walls above the gates, where the leading men of the city met for trials and decisions.
 - 2. She gives her husband wise counsel. **Proverbs 31:26** “Her mouth speaks wisdom, and loving instruction is on her tongue.”
 - viii. **JR Miller** “Every woman who consents to become the wife of a godly man, ought to settle it in her mind at the very beginning, before she enters the sacred relation—that she will never make life or work harder for her husband, will never hinder him in his business or in his duties—but will "do him good and not evil all the days of her life."
- 3. A P-31 takes good care of her family.**

- i. She clothes her family. **Proverbs 31:21** “She is not afraid for her household when it snows, for all in her household are doubly clothed.” (See also Pr 31:13, 19, 22.)
- ii. She feeds her family. **Proverbs 31:15** “She rises while it is still night and proves food for her household.”
- iii. She manages her household (she is a dedicated homemaker). **Proverbs 31:27** “She watches over the activities of her household and is never idle.”
 - 1. What does it mean that she watches over the activities of her household?
 - a. She keeps a well-ordered house.
 - b. She has well-behaved children.
 - c. She leads her children to Christ.
- iv. **Proverbs 31:28** “Her children rise up and call her blessed.” They give her a standing ovation. They rise in her presence out of deep respect.
- v. A woman’s primary calling is the home – her family.
 - 1. **1 Timothy 5:14** “Therefore, I want younger women to marry, have children, manage their households, and give the adversary no opportunity to accuse us.”
 - 2. **Titus 2:4** “so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children, to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, and in submission to their husbands, so that God’s word will not be slandered.”
 - 3. The Proverbs 31 woman is shown to make money in several different ways. But she does not forsake her primary calling – marriage and family. She made clothing for her family and then more clothing with the leftover materials. These were sold to merchants, and she used the money to buy and field and plant a vineyard.
 - 4. A woman can certainly work outside the home, but not to the neglect of her home.
- vi. **JR Miller** “The woman who makes a sweet, beautiful home, filling it with love and prayer and purity — is doing something better than anything else her hands could find to do beneath the skies! JR Miller”

4. A P-31 is a hard worker.

- i. **Proverbs 31:17 (NIV)** “She sets about her work vigorously”
- ii. **Proverbs 31:17 (NLT)** “She is energetic and strong, a hard worker.”
- iii. She works with a good attitude. **Proverbs 31:13** “And works with willing hands.”
- iv. She does whatever is necessary to feed her family. **Proverbs 31:14** “She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from far away.”
- v. She is an early riser. **Proverbs 31:15** “She rises while it is still night and proves food for her household.”
- vi. She works long hours, if necessary. **Proverbs 31:18** “She sees that her profits are good, and her lamp never goes out at night.”

- vii. She is never idle or lazy. **Proverbs 31:27** "She watches over the activities of her household and is never idle."
- viii. She bought property and planted a vineyard. **Proverbs 31:16** "She evaluates a field and buys it; she plans a vineyard with her earnings."
 - 1. She had to work to earn the extra money.
 - 2. She had to shop for the property.
 - 3. She had to clear it of stones.
 - 4. She had to plant the vines.
 - 5. She had to dig a winepress.
 - 6. She had to build a tower to protect it.
- ix. A P-31 is a woman who is busy, not idle; always working; always producing; always fixing; always cultivating; always cleaning; always creating; always renovating; always building; always serving.

5. A P-31 is strong.

- i. She is physically strong.
 - 1. **Proverbs 31:17** "She draws on her strength and reveals that her arms are strong."
 - 2. **Proverbs 31:25** "Strength and honor are her clothing."
 - 3. She's not necessarily a body-builder, or a Cross-Fit fanatic, but she is no weakling. She doesn't need her husband's help with her work very often. She is physically capable. If she gets sick, it is not because she neglects her health. And when she falls ill, her body is fully prepared for the battle.
 - 4. How did she become so strong? By not shying away from hard work.
 - a. She works with willing hands. Pr 31:13
 - b. She brings her food from far away. Pr 31:14
 - c. She cooks for her household. Pr 31:15
 - d. She plants a vineyard. Pr 31:16
 - e. She extends her hands to the spinning staff, and her hands to hold the spindle. Pr 31:19
 - f. She makes her own bed coverings. Pr 31:22
 - g. She makes and sells linen garments and delivers them to the merchants. Pr 31:24
- ii. She is emotionally strong.
 - 1. **Proverbs 31:21** "She is not afraid for her household when it snows."
 - 2. **Proverbs 31:25** "She can laugh at the time to come."
 - 3. She can handle adversity, hardship, trials, bad news. She is not depressed or grumpy. She does not panic. She does not worry or complain. She is positive, cheerful, joyful. She is a rock. She is tough as nails.
 - 4. Where does her emotional strength come from? Her emotional strength comes from her unshakeable faith in God. She fears the Lord (Pr 31:30).

5. **Isaiah 26:3** “You will keep the mind that is dependent on you in perfect peace, for it is trusting in you.”
 6. **Isaiah 32:17** “The result of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quiet confidence forever.”
- 6. A P-31 is compassionate.**
- i. **Proverbs 31:20** “Her hands reach out to the poor, and she extends her hands to the needy.”
 - ii. She sees those in need (notices), feels sorry for them, and takes action to alleviate the suffering around her.
 - iii. Charles Swindoll tells pastors that they need to develop a tough hide, and a tender heart. The P-31 a woman who is physically and emotionally strong and tough. But her heart is soft and tender.
- 7. A P-31 is financially savvy.**
- i. **Proverbs 31:16** “She evaluates a field and buys it; she plants a vineyard with her earnings.”
 - ii. **Proverbs 31:18** “She sees that her profits are good.”
 - iii. **Proverbs 31:24** “She makes and sells linen garments; she delivers belts to the merchants.”
 - iv. The point is not that a P-31 needs to augment her husband’s income, but that she is a good financial partner. She is thrifty. She is so far from wasteful that she brings in money. She uses her money wisely and not wastefully.
 - v. **George Lawson, 1821** “The virtuous woman employs her money in useful purchases.”
 - vi. Many women are known for their shopping – not for necessities, but for non-essentials. The P-31 doesn’t waste the family’s money.
 - vii. Her financial wisdom is seen in her preparation for hardship. She anticipates hardships (emergencies) and plans for them. **Proverbs 31:21** “She is not afraid for her household when it snows, for all in her household are doubly clothed.”
 - viii. A P-31 is more passionate about saving and investing than spending.
- 8. A P-31 is skilled.**
- i. Some women can’t do anything but put on makeup and fix hair. They are helpless. The Proverbs 31 woman learns the skills necessary to run a thriving household.
 - ii. She can cook. Pr 31:15
 - iii. She can make clothing. Pr 31:13, 19, 22, 24
 - iv. She knows how to buy property. Pr 31:16
 - v. She knows agriculture. Pr 31:16
 - vi. She finds out the skills she needs to be an effective homemaker, and she develops them.
- 9. A P-31 makes herself physically attractive.**
- i. **Proverbs 31:22** “Her clothing is fine linen and purple.”
 - ii. She doesn’t dress in rags. She dresses in the finest clothing.

- iii. She knows that her physical appearance is very important to her husband, and she does what she can to please him.
- iv. Don't mistake this for wasteful spending. Remember. She makes her own clothing.
- v. Making yourself attractive doesn't mean being a lavish spender.

10. A P-31 has a controlled tongue.

- i. Proverbs has a lot to say about a wife with an uncontrolled tongue:
 1. **Proverbs 19:13** "A foolish son is his father's ruin, and a wife's nagging is an endless dripping." An endless dripping is annoying. Whenever the toilet or the sink are dripping in my house, I cannot sleep. A man has no rest with a nagging wife.
 2. **Proverbs 21:9** "Better to live on the corner of a roof than to share a house with a nagging wife." If you lived on the corner of a roof, you would be in danger of falling off. It is better to live on the corner of the roof than with a nagging wife.
 3. **Proverbs 21:19** "Better to live in a wilderness than with a nagging and hot-tempered wife." It is better to live in the wilderness, exposed to the elements and wild animals, homeless, than to live with a nagging and hot-tempered wife.
- ii. **Proverbs 31:26** "Her mouth speaks wisdom, and loving instruction is on her tongue."
- iii. She does not gossip, nag, curse, or yell.
- iv. She speaks words of encouragement and edification to all who listen.

11. A P-31 fears the Lord.

- i. **Proverbs 31:30** "Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord will be praised."
- ii. Outer beauty fades with age, but inner beauty lasts. It is more valuable.
- iii. **Mabel Hale, 1922** "A desire to be beautiful is not unwomanly. But, mark it: true beauty is not of the face—but of the soul! There is a beauty so deep and lasting, that it will shine out of the homeliest face and make it lovely! This is the beauty to be first sought and admired. It is a quality of the mind and heart—and is manifested in word and deed. A happy heart, a smiling face, loving words and deeds, and a desire to be of service – will make any girl beautiful! A beautiful soul shining out of a homely face—is far more attractive than a beautiful face out of which looks a soul full of selfishness and pride! Let your chief charm be of heart and mind—not of face and form. Seek the true beauty which lasts even into old age!"
- iv. What does it mean to fear the Lord? It is deep respect and awe for God, but also a healthy fear of God's fatherly displeasure and discipline.
- v. Sometimes translated piety.
- vi. **John Angell James** "the cultivation and exercise of all right and holy dispositions towards God."
- vii. Her top priority is God. Her main goal is to love and glorify God. She is active in church. She is dedicated to her private devotions. Her passion is to love

God. Her purpose is to serve God. Her pursuit is the holiness of God. Her path is the word of God. Her prayer is the will of God.

viii. Question: How is it possible to be a P-31?

1. Answer: Become a woman who fears the Lord.

V. GOSPEL

1. On the one hand, you should strive to imitate the Proverbs 31 woman.
2. On the other hand, you might get discouraged when you compare yourself to her. Some women hate her. Some have rejected her as completely unrealistic.
3. Don't be too quick about ignoring those feelings of discouragement. The truth is that nobody can measure to God's standard. We are all sinners. Failures in God's eyes. And only when you see yourself as a moral failure can you be saved. If you see that you are a sinner, then throw yourself onto Christ for salvation. He came to die for your sins, to rescue you from condemnation, and to save you.
4. You don't need to be a Proverbs 31 woman to go to heaven. You need Jesus to go to heaven.

VI. CONCLUSION

1. Today I encourage you to dedicate yourself to becoming a P-31.
2. To the men, I encourage you to become worthy of such a woman's love, and loyalty, and service.