

Reading

Proverbs 31: 10–13. 19–20. 30–31

The woman who fears the Lord is the one to praise.

A reading from the book of Proverbs.

- 10 A perfect wife — who can find her?
She is far beyond the price of pearls.
- 11 Her husband's heart has confidence in her,
from her he will derive no little profit.
- 12 Advantage and not hurt she brings him
all the days of her life.
- 13 She is always busy with wool and with flax,
she does her work with eager hands.
- 19 She sets her hands to the distaff,
her fingers grasp the spindle.
- 20 She holds out her hand to the poor,
she opens her arms to the needy.
- 30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty empty;
the woman who is wise is the one to praise.
- 31 Give her a share in what her hands have worked for,
and let her works tell her praises at the city gates.

The word of the Lord.

Looking at the Text:

+M O-6 Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31
The woman who fears the Lord is the one to praise.

The Book of Proverbs

Solomon left a legacy of wisdom in three books of which Proverbs is one. Proverbs is a collection of short, concise sayings, passing on some practical wisdom on how to live, in relationship, walking with God and one another. The sayings range from advice to young people, self-discipline, marriage and family life, to living morally and seeking truth, in tones from common-sense reminders to careful warning. The word 'proverb' comes from a Hebrew word meaning 'to rule', so you might say the Proverbs are guidance to govern the way we live.

Background to this passage

This extract is from the Epilogue to the Book of Proverbs, giving a picture of a woman of strong character, wisdom and compassion. Yes, she is a great wife and mother, but she is also a wise, resourceful and gifted businesswoman and multi-tasker. According to the text, her integrity, strength and dignity come from her rootedness in a life of faith. No mention is made of her looks or physical attributes. The attraction is her personality and giftedness. Rather than an ideal, she is to be taken as an inspiration for both men and women in a respectful, mutual relationship.

Reflecting on Scripture together

Use the 'Reflecting on Scripture together — a simple way' in the introduction 'Choosing your Wedding readings'.

Further Reflection

Following the 'slow reading' process, here are some questions for further reflection:

- What attracts you about your wife or husband to be? What do you most respect about them? How would you describe their qualities/character and gifts?
- What gifts and qualities do you yourself bring to the marriage?
- What qualities are most important to you in a relationship?
- How do you think you can best sustain a happy, healthy relationship?
- What do you particularly like about this reading? Why might it be suitable for your wedding?

Note about the Reading

+ = This reading selection is new to the *Order of Christian Marriage* and so is not found in the Lectionary (1983). It is included in the Scripture Readings on the Liturgy Office website.

M = this indicates that this is a reading which speaks explicitly about Marriage. One of the chosen readings must be taken from those which are about Marriage.

These notes have been prepared by Caroline Dollard, Marriage & Family Life Project, CBCEW www.catholicfamily.org.uk This is one of a series of Liturgy Office resources to support the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*. www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Marriage © 2016 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales