

# A Virtuous Woman

by Mary Peckham

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*A virtuous woman is a rare find, characterized by her trustworthiness, hard work, selflessness, and responsibility, with a wise and kind tongue.*

**Duration:** 51:53

**Topics:** "Virtuous Woman"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker encourages the audience to be living testimonies of the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He shares a personal story about his grandmother who, despite being crippled with arthritis, remained a testimony of faith until her death. The speaker challenges the audience to examine if their faith is just talk or if it is reflected in their actions and words. He emphasizes the importance of being a testimony to others and references biblical figures like John Bunyan and Susanna Wesley as examples. The sermon concludes with the idea that a woman's surest testimony is defined by her works and that others should give testimony of our faith.

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## Transcript

In the program now that I've got to sing, I hope you can stand back. Don't think that the pianist has died, because I sing unaccompanied. Okay? There's a call ringing out on the wings of the storm That is sweet in the loss to their doom Tis the call of the Lord of the harvest of men Idle hands, has that call reached you? Idle hands, in the marketplace Jesus once said Idle hands, while the time passed away Some went willingly, for others never once stood Idle hands, till the close of day Idle hands, but the Master is calling to thee Art thou willing that call to receive?

Art thou idly whining, life's hours away? Will you go, that they might believe? When the last call is given, God's harvest is ended And darkness sweeps over the land When the saints of all ages at last have ascended And you before Jesus stand When you're safe on eternity's shore Will you wish you could live your life more? When he asks for the fruit of your labors Will you offer him idle hands? That's the first time I've sung since I had the flu in my chest And it's a little bit croaky, but never mind You got the words anyway Idle hands, while the time passed away Some went willingly forth, others never once stood Idle hands, till the close of day Well, may God grant to us such a stirring by the Holy Spirit In this conference That the hands that have been idle will become involved once again Now, are you afraid of Proverbs chapter 31?

Well, let's turn to it and see Well, at least you know what's in it And here it is from verse 10 of Proverbs chapter 31 Who can find a virtuous woman?

For her price is above rubies The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her So that he shall have no need of spoil She will do him good And not evil all the days of her life She seeketh wool and flax And worketh willingly with her hands She is like the merchant's ships She bringeth her food from afar She riseth also while it is yet night And giveth meat to her household and a portion to her maidens She considereth a field and buyeth it With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard She girdeth her loins with strength and strengtheneth her arms She perceiveth that her merchandise is good Her candle goeth not out by night She layeth her hands to the spindle and her hands hold the distaff She stretcheth out her hand to the poor Yea, she reacheth forth her hand to the needy She is not

afraid of the snow for her household For all her household are clothed with scarlet She maketh herself coverings of tapestry Her clothing is silk and purple Her husband is known in the gates when he sitteth among the elders of the land She maketh fine linen and selleth it and delivereth girdles unto the merchant Strength and honour at her clothing And she shall rejoice in time to come She openeth her mouth with wisdom And in her tongue is the law of kindness She looketh well to the ways of her household And eateth not the bread of idleness Her children arise up and call her blessed Her husband also, and he praiseth her Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain But a woman that heareth the Lord, she shall be praised Give her of

the fruit of her hands And let her own works praise her in the gates Amen, and God will bless to us this reading from His Word Let us prepare our hearts again in prayer Our Father, Thou hast set a high standard for us in Thy Word And we want to be available to Thee this afternoon That Thou wilt mould us and fashion us and make us what Thou wouldst have us to be We pray Thee, Heavenly Father, that Thou wilt bless Thy Word to us And inspire us, Lord, through Thy Word And open our eyes to behold wondrous things out of Thy love So speak to our prepared hearts, we pray Thee, in Jesus' name, Amen I got married late in life, I was 37 when I was married I'd had a good fling from the age of 19 Globe-trotting, going here and there on my own And enjoying the work of the Lord It wasn't without

difficulties and it wasn't without challenge And it wasn't without privation I could keep you all afternoon telling you stories of privation in the highlands and islands of Scotland But I look back with joy on it all And I wish that I could start it all over again with the experience of today And be a little younger to do it But there it is But I remember one lady who had six of her family coming to me on one occasion And she said, you know what you need, Mary, is a husband and six children You'd learn an awful lot And your sanctification would be well tested Well, I've discovered that You know what a husband is?

He is the man who helps you through all the troubles that you would never have had had you not met him That's true, you know It really is true But I'm glad I'm glad that I've been on both sides of the fence I was on the one side for long enough and I've been on the other side for long enough And sanctification is tested to its utmost When you bring up a family, isn't that true? You become a psychologist and you become all sorts of things when you're handling a family But what about this virtuous woman?

The Bible says she's hard to find The Bible says that it is a rare thing to come across a virtuous woman And the kind of woman that we find in this chapter is hard to find But the church needs these kind of women Virtuous women I want us to consider for a little bit This looking glass for ladies This mirror for ladies Quite a challenge to read it And we can be even a little bit afraid of it But let's not be afraid of it Let's

bring it into this sanctuary And see what exactly is meant by a virtuous woman First of all, then, we're going to consider together A woman's most coveted gifts That's right Because women being women They covet certain things And we find it in the last verse of the The last but one verse of the chapter Favor and beauty Favor and beauty A woman's most coveted gifts What is favor?

What is beauty? Favor can be charm But charm can be artificial And charm can often be a cover-up For the real person within I've lived long enough now to discover That very, very often The most charming Are those who Very often Are covering up what is really beneath Favor, it's deceitful That's what the Bible says It's deceitful In other words, he's saying, in effect This is something on the surface And we tend, we women tend to live on the surface, do we not? Very conscious of the people around us And very conscious of the world around us Favor is deceitful Well, Samson found that out, didn't he?

He found that out with Delilah She must have been a very charming woman She charmed him to bits And when you read the story of Delilah And her relationship to Samson He was stupid, wasn't he? He really was Because one time after another the same thing happened And he didn't take note of it What was it? Oh, it was her charm It was her way with him She deceived him left, right and center And she blinded him left, right and center One time after another The Philistines be upon you, Samson And the stupid man did it again And again And again He was charmed to bits with Delilah He lay there with his head on her lap And she stroked his brow and so on And he gave her his secret concerning his hair And the vow that was upon him and so on And Delilah's charm cost him his strength And it cost him his vision His eyes were put out And it cost him eventually his life She must have been a very, very strong woman And on his part a very, very charming woman Faber is deceitful He couldn't resist the fair sex, Solomon And that was his downfall He loved many wives Limited he had He had 300, 300 Don't know what he did with them But he just couldn't let one of them pass him by After all he was the king and he could do what he liked And so he was charmed He had a fair amount of responsibility In connection with all these wives and concubines See that he had A good job he was as rich as he was To keep them all Faber is deceitful Charm is deceitful And then it says that beauty is vain Wow, I remember praying as a young girl Oh Lord, make me beautiful on the outside Didn't get an answer to that And then as an afterthought Just in case the Lord thought I wasn't right You know, just asking for something on the outside And on the inside too, Lord Didn't mean that, did I?

Beauty is vain What does vain mean? It's empty And so we spend so much time trying to beautify ourselves And the market is profiting by our stupidity It's only poor soil that needs top dressing, isn't it? Did you get that one? Poor soil that needs top dressing But there's so much of us on the surface, isn't there? And there's so little of depth underneath that surface That's the problem We face the world with our charm and beauty if we've got it And we forget that that is not virtue That that is deceit Or can be deceit And that our most coveted gifts don't count at all The things that we want The externals that we want The Bible says, let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us And establish thou the work of our hands Do you remember that book, Total Woman?

Some years ago it came to your life The stupidest book that I've ever read in my life The women were expected to meet their husbands in the evening in baby doll pajamas And all that sort of thing I supposed to turn them on But pity the man who needs baby doll pajamas to turn them on Well, the women in South Africa, they just went for it This Total Woman And in our church Well, it was a Baptist church, I may tell you In our Baptist church The women, bless their hearts They were going for it They were reading this book And there were some people who came from America And they had these seminars for which you had to pay I didn't go And the women folk in the church went They were carried away with it One day I

called in the home of one And the husband met me at the door And he said, oh hello Mary Are you going down to the chemist to buy something to make yourself pretty?

I said, oh no, I'm not I said, maybe if I did and I plastered myself Then maybe the beauty of the Lord wouldn't be seen anymore in me He didn't know what to say to that one Well, it was all geared to keep marriages intact And that man ended up in divorce Ended up throwing himself in front of a train A tragedy The Total Woman didn't do anything for them Who can find a virtuous woman? A rare find Her price is above rubies Who can find her? Well, there are her desires By nature, I suppose And well, we are women And that's the way we are But, as we read this chapter There's nothing said about this woman in this chapter Being charming Or being beautiful There's not a word about it The whole concentration is on a virtuous woman And her virtues can be compacted together in a word Love and responsibility Because she was a responsible woman And so we find a woman's noblest virtues illustrated And such virtues are rare and priceless Now, if you have sympathies with women's lib You wouldn't want to read this chapter You wouldn't want to have anything to do with it But if you are a true Christian And a child of God Then you want to learn Someone has said that a doctrine adorned Is a doctrine understood You've got to show the world And then they will understand They're not interested in what you say But they are interested in what you show And this woman, she showed her virtues She adorned the doctrine of God in her life And the Bible says she was a rare find Now, the first thing that it says about this virtuous woman Is this, that she was trustworthy The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her So that's the first thing Her husband trusted her How beautiful How wonderful Does my husband trust me?

Does your husband trust you? Can he give you his purse? And know that you won't squander it You know, we've got a law, Colin and I, about money We've never fallen out about money, never And I'll give you the secret It's an open secret When my purse is empty, I empty his And when his purse is empty, he empties mine And we never have an argument about it Never We've got an understanding But we both need money And if one has it and the other hasn't, then you know what happens But we trust one another That's the thing If Colin takes my pension on a Monday morning And he brings me back just a few pennies I know that he hasn't spent it wrongly I know that whatever he spent it on, he needed it Somebody needed it Or to have trust in one another How many marriages are ruined and wrecked Because they don't trust one another And especially as we get older in years Then there's always that little bit of lack of trust maybe Especially in the environment in which we find ourselves The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her He shall have no need of spoil He doesn't need to go and get the spoil of battle He can trust his wife He can trust her implicitly And all will be well She is trustworthy Furthermore, in verse 12, she's a true helpmate for him She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life Now think of that one She will do him good Now I sadly met many men in Christian service Who have lost the fire because of their wives Because she's not in sympathy with him Because she's not one with him in the work he's engaged in And so again and again and again sadly Oh so sadly She has not done him good but evil She has not been a helpmate She has not recognized that the calling is a dual calling In the work of God And she has hindered him left, right and centre Maybe she's been, I was going to use a Scottish word there And I don't know whether you know She would be always yearning Do you know that word?

No? Complaining and mourning Sometimes I tease Colin when he mourns about something I begin to sing Mourning on a Monday, mourning on a Tuesday And then we go through the week She's not a mourner I assure you But she will do him good and not evil all the days of her life Do you remember what it says there in her husband in verse 23 Her husband is known in the gates Underline the word her and see what you read Her husband, her husband is known in the gates He is known for being her husband There she is

behind the scenes And her testimony has carried through And it's her husband You know what it's like when your children go to school And you go to the PTA parent teacher meeting Oh you're Christine's mum aren't you?

Claim to fame And then they come into their teenage years And they're introduced as Oh this is Dr Peckham's daughter I'm not, my name is Christine Peckham She's on her own as it were She's establishing her own identity And her husband, this woman's husband Is known in the gates Why? I'll tell you why Because of what she has done for him Because she has been the making of him Are you the making of your husband? Am I the making of mine? Trustworthy, a true helpmate And verse 13, 15 She seetheth wool and flax and worketh willingly with her hand She's not afraid of hard work this woman She is at it as we say Morning, noon and night She's a hard worker behind the scenes She's not demanding But she's making her contribution all the time To the home, to the family And she is a rare find Her price is above rubies She's thrifty, she's tireless, she's selfless She's thoughtful, she's generous And in verse 26, from her comes wisdom Her tongue, in her tongue is wisdom In verse 26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom And in her tongue is the law of kindness Oh how often the tongue becomes an unruly evil How often the tongue destroys How often the tongue hurts and wounds I was reading the story not very long ago of David Livingstone A great Scottish explorer and missionary And David Livingstone's wife was not a very healthy woman And there was a lot of tittle-tattle about her not being on the missing field with him They chatted and talked behind the scenes Until she went out and joined her husband And as a result of her deprivation she suffered on the missing field, she died All because of the tittle-tattle behind the scenes Oh how destructive is the tongue How great a matter a little fire kindles And it's amazing among Christians how stories get around A story, when I was in the guides, in the Girl Guides I remember one game that we used to play in the Girl Guides We were sat round in a half-moon And the first one was told a story in her ear And then that story had to go from one to the other Right around the circle, and you're smiling, you know exactly what happened The story was unrecognisable at the end of the row Doesn't that happen in Christian circles?

Oh have you heard about so-and-so? And that is repeated, you know It's not public knowledge, you know But by the time it gets around it is public knowledge But when it's nothing like the story that started off And that's among Christians And that's Medina Church Fellowship Everybody embellishes the story a little bit And then it becomes a little bit more embellished And added to little bits here and there And then it becomes unrecognisable And what happens? The person concerning whom the story was told in the first place is destroyed And destroyed by the Lord's people In her tongue is the law of kindness She openeth her mouth with wisdom Who can control the tongue?

Only God can So, her tongue, wisdom and kindness And her testimony is not the testimony that she has given The testimony is the testimony of others The testimony that other people have given concerning her And what is that? Her children rise up to call her blessed Her husband and he also praise of her Why? Because of her responsibility Because of her love And that love was not confined to the family It was also to the poor She was a hospitable woman She was a hardworking woman And she was a selfless woman A selfless woman She gave herself to every task And furthermore She wasn't afraid of the snow for her household She saw a way to close her children She wasn't leaving it all to him She made her great contribution to her household And she herself, she didn't go shabbily around either She was clothed in purple, we'll read She makes herself coverings of tapestry Her clothing is silken and purple What a woman this was So often today We cannot tell a woman from a man You cannot tell very often A teenager from the street Very, very often I look and I can't make out Whether it's a fellow or a girl that's coming towards

me We live in a unisex society But this woman was clothed in purple and scarlet And this woman was clothed as a woman And this woman behaved as a woman And this woman didn't join the woman's lib And hand it all over to her husband She took her responsibility in the home You know, we as mothers Spend more time with our children Normally than the father does And very often we have more influence with them And how many great men have gone out in the past And they look back Remember John Bunyan You remember all many of these greats in the past How they looked back in their homes Remember Susanna Wesley How she taught her children How she looked after her children How she brought up her children She was a strong woman that She taught them, she preached to them She showed them the way And she was totally involved behind the scenes No wonder that out of that home came a John and a Charles Wesley Who can find a virtuous woman?

Finally, a woman's surest testimony is defined Verse 30, she shall be praised, as I said Let her own words praise her in the days It's one thing for me to give my testimony And I will give it to you later on It's one thing for me to give my testimony And it's one thing for you to give your testimony But it's a totally different thing When other people give their testimony of you Is it different then?

Are you praying at this conference That God will so bless you And indeed as we said in the first session That as you go out And as you return to your home That you will be a living testimony A living witness To the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ That you will be in your home A testimony to such an extent That the gospel of Jesus Christ is adorned In all you do And in all you say And in all that you are I had a grandmother who was a testimony She was for seven years She had been a hard working woman all her life Brought up nine of a family She was for the last seven years of her life She was on her bed Crippled with arthritis Her hands were closed She could only hold a cup like this You had to put cotton wool in To keep her nails out of the palm of her hand You couldn't turn her in bed Except with her nightdress She was pulling her nightdress She was in such pain Her knees were chewed I used to rub her When I was a teenager Rub her joints with methylated spirits To bring some heat in it That would counteract the pain That was in her joints But I remember grandmother singing I'd be down in the kitchen And I would hear her singing the songs of Zion Singing in that condition Singing and yet in pain When she came to die Her daughters, three of them were sitting beside her My mother was one of them And she said to them Oh, she said, look at the angels at the foot of my bed And they said, no granny, there's no angels at the foot of your bed Yes, she said, there are two And they thought she was delirious No, she said, they've come for me And she closed her eyes and she was gone Oh, she was a testament And my grandpa, he died when he was 92 And the last years of his life I think also seven years He was in his bed He had been ill on a number of occasions He had a sense of humor And he used to say to them As they came to visit him when he was really poorly He would say, ah, you don't need to worry I'm not going this time You don't need to cry over me Just save your tears But then when it came to the time And they were sitting up with him during the night The same three sisters They were sitting up right through the night with him He was very, very ill And he apologized And he said, I'm so sorry That you're having such a hard time with me Having to sit up with me all night But you will only have two more days And two more nights And two more days passed And two more nights passed And at half past eight in the morning He slept into the presence of the Lord He was a testimony A wonderful testimony A testimony to behold A testimony to see It wasn't all talk with them No Is it all talk with me?

I'm going to give you a testimony I'd rather somebody else give mine I really won't We can talk about all the wonderful experiences That we have had in life In relation to God But her own works will praise her In the gates Her husband, he will praise her Her children They will rise up to call her blessed What a

testimony What a wonderful testimony Coming from those who are closest to her And that's important You remember that in the commandments That God says Honor thy father and thy mother That thy days may be long upon the land Which the Lord thy God giveth thee What is he saying?

He's saying in effect, you know True religion must begin at home Right there where it is most difficult Right there where people know you best Right there where you've grown up with them They know your every mood They know your temperament They know everything about you And there, right there Oh, you could have a marvelous testimony in the church You could have a marvelous testimony in the public eye But in the home, that's where it matters And her children will rise up to call her blessed And her husband, he will praise her That's searching, isn't it?

Honor thy father and thy mother That thy days may be long upon the land Which the Lord thy God giveth thee Start at home And if this conference is going to mean anything at all It's going to mean that your home is going to be different It's going to mean that your attitudes in the home Are going to be different And it's going to mean that you're going to live The kind of virtuous, selfless existence That this woman lived Because it is really a selfless existence A few years ago, I went up to the Hebrides To my mother's funeral And in the Hebrides, they leave the remains in the house So that friends and neighbors can come in And have a last look Before the lid is put on the coffin And it is carried out of the house And I came in, my mother had died suddenly Now over the years, from the time that I was 19 years of age I was away in the Lord's work And occasionally would come home And these eyes gleamed and beamed and twinkled When I would come And I'd be enveloped in her embrace And I looked at her Her remains And I said to my sister She's never ever lived a day for herself She never lived a day for herself She lived her life for her family She lived her life for others Generous, hospitable, you name it But I never knew my mother to live for herself She cared for us all She worked for us all Labored for us all My father sailed the seven seas He was a merchant seaman So we saw very little of him He was faithful, yes And he kept up the home, yes But we as children never knew him We might as well have been brought up in a one-parent family But she took in lodgers And she worked And when I say worked, I mean worked Because all the fuel that was burnt through the winter Had to be cut out as a peat bog during the summer And all that fuel had to be lifted up To be dried in the wind And then to be taken onto the road And then to be stacked there And then another day to bring it all home And put it in the peat stack behind the house And stack it there And my mother was continually at it Laboring and working And to be a woman like this As I've said before, you have to be selfless You have to give yourself Give yourself And give yourself to others Sometimes I say to Colin at home You know Colin, I'm going to live for myself for the next half hour Don't disturb me You know where I live for myself for the next half hour No guesses?

In the bath Exactly But so demanding Is the responsibility when you have others in the home What are we? Are we idlers? Idle hands? Or are we selfless laborers? On another theme The Lord taught us to pray That for the Lord of the harvest That he might send out laborers Into the harvest field So from laborers in the home We go laboring into the field Not loitering But laboring in the field Many nowadays Don't stay too long on the field They come back Too much for us to demand Because there you've got to You've got to forget yourself And give yourself For the souls of men And women So what must we say about the virtuous woman?

Are you willing to read her story daily? And apply it to your own life? And are you willing for the call To give yourself unreservedly To God And to the field of service In which God has placed you? A lady came once to the vestry To see H. Spurgeon And she said to him God has called me to be a missionary And suddenly he noticed the ring on her hand And he said, are you married? Yes But God has called me to be a

missionary Have you got any children? Yes, she said She had a big family Well, thank God, he said But God has called you to be a missionary And not only called you to be a missionary But also given to you your congregation She thought of being a missionary Far afield But her mission field was right there And we need mothers in America We need mothers in Scotland Oh, it's tragic When I go to the post office On a Monday morning And I see these young women With a lot of little children And they've got a sheet full Of little books in their hands Getting welfare And getting this and getting that And getting the other thing And smoking away at their cigarettes And probably living on drugs And they have got nothing They don't know how to spend their money They spend it on things that they don't need And they spend it on toys For the children Trying to palm off their children with toys Instead of with love And they're not mothers They never intended to be mothers They accidentally became mothers And they've never known what it takes To take on the responsibility of motherhood Oh, may God bless His word to our hearts And God make us And God make me A virtuous woman A woman Whose testimony is not just Gribbly, finite But a testimony in everything that I do Amen Shall we have a word of prayer?

Our Father, we thank You for Thy Word There is a lamp unto our feet And it is a light unto our path Make us testimonies, we pray Thee Make us available to Thee, Lord Every bit, the Lord's Giving to Thee the key to every area of our lives And being forgetful of ourselves Planted us the corn of wheat in the ground The corn of wheat that falls into the ground and dies In order that it might bring forth fruit In the lives of others So help us, Father, in Jesus' name Amen

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