

## Proverbs Women

by John Cobin, Ph.D. for *The Times Examiner*  
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There are *two kinds* of women and wives described in the book of Proverbs: (1) *virtuous* and (2) *odious*.

The first kind, the far rarer version, is highlighted in chapter 31:10-31 and is called virtuous, wise, and gracious in Proverbs 11:16, 22; 12:4; and 14:1. I think too that it is fair to say that “Whoever finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD (Proverbs 18:22) applies only to this rarer sort of wife, who is so uncommon that her price is “far above rubies”. The New Testament tells us that this kind of woman is the “glory of the man” (1 Corinthians 11:7), and that she is respectful and submissive—even to the point of deeming her husband to be her “lord” (Ephesians 5:22-24, 33; 1 Peter 3:1-6).

This virtuous kind of woman is focused on serving the Lord and her husband rather than on fulfilling the “fairy princess” dream of romance novels or even of old-line Southern culture. The Apostle Paul probably makes reference to such a virtuous and even *utilitarian* wife in 1 Corinthians 9:5, where he remarks: “Do we [i.e., Paul, Barnabas, and Sosthenes] have no right to take along a believing wife [on perilous missionary journeys], as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?” She does not need the big house, the rose garden, or to be proud of seeing the kids in fancy clothes with opulent and safe lifestyles. She is focused on the battle and supporting her husband in the fight for Truth (Proverbs 23:23). She understands the nature of spiritual warfare and that taking dominion of the earth for God might require some hardship (2 Corinthians 10:5; Genesis 1:26-28). Apparently, the Apostle Paul did not have a problem with the idea of having a utilitarian wife as a helpmeet in serving the Lord.

The other kind of woman is described basically everywhere else in the book of Proverbs (17 times)—in particular Proverbs 30:20-23. Consider:

- “Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness. For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear: For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat; **for an odious woman when she is married**; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress” (King James Version).
- Or, using modern language, “This *is* the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, And says, “I have done no wickedness.” For three *things* the earth is perturbed, Yes, for four it cannot bear up: For a servant when he reigns, A fool when he is filled with food, **A hateful woman when she is married**, and a maidservant who succeeds her mistress” (New King James Version).

The term “odious” summarizes other descriptive characteristics of such women found in Proverbs, namely: loud, contentious, angry, brawling, clamorous, ignorant, foolish, indiscreet, unfaithful, evil or “strange”, flattering, crafty or subtle, and deceitful. Check out Proverbs 2:16; 5:3, 20; 6:24, 26; 7:5, 10; 9:13; 11:22; 20:16; 21:9, 19; 23:27; 25:24; 27:13; 27:15; plus Job 31:9. Would any or all of these terms apply to modern feminists and their leaders? I think so.

And the grief of being married to an odious woman is described or alluded to in Ecclesiastes 9:9 and 7:27-29: “Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that *is* your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.” And, “Here is what I have found,” says the Preacher, *adding* one thing to the other to find out the reason, which my soul still seeks but I cannot find: One man among a thousand I have found, but a woman among all these I have not found. Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.”

Perhaps one could argue that there can be gradations between the two extremes, especially dependent on a woman’s conversion. But suffice it to say that feminism and the media tend to push women to be more of the odious variety. How sad too that the Christian church has been afflicted by a growing wave of odious women. Would God be gracious to us and grant us more virtuous women instead. Would God help preachers and parents to cultivate such women that our Lord would be glorified!

In any case, we should be careful to qualify what is meant by a “Proverbs woman”.