

The Illusion of the Successful Career Woman:

Career Path vs. Homemaker

The illusion in our culture is that a woman finds her ultimate fulfillment in achieving success in the workplace. The reality is that a wife fulfills God's purpose in creating her when she helps her husband (Gen. 2:18). One of the ways she does this is by being the working manager of household affairs (Prov. 31:10-31). God designed wives to be "homemakers," literally "workers at home" (Titus 2:5). God's will is that wives "guide" or "manage the house" (I Tim. 5:14, KJV & NKJV). "Homemaker" is defined by Webster's Dictionary as "one who manages a household especially as a wife and mother."

You may often have been asked, "What do you plan to be when you grow up?" What was your answer: wife, mother, homemaker, doctor, teacher, fireman, grocery store clerk, lawyer, accountant? You may already be in college and still struggling with choosing a major field of study. You may have chosen one, but become uncertain about it. One young man graduated from the University of Alabama in Huntsville planning to be an engineer. He was on their co-op program so he received some experience working as an engineer before receiving his Bachelor's Degree (5 years involved). He continued his education and received his Master in Business Administration from the University of Alabama (two years involved). While at the University of Alabama, he worked for a martial arts academy and loved it. He has his own school now and absolutely loves working with the students. So, goodbye engineering! But, as a business owner, he does use his MBA. Life does not always follow the path we envisioned in our youth.

Education is important; it is good to know how to do things and to accomplish things. But why might a young lady need to pursue a way to support herself? Some reasons: she may need to help her parents financially while at home; she may never marry; she may marry and need to help supplement the income. The husband may be in a wreck and become an invalid. But if the wife works outside the home, where should the main emphasis be – the job outside the home or the role of homemaker?

Genesis 2:18 – And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Woman was created to be a companion for man and to be a helper for him.

Proverbs 31:10-31 describes **The Worthy Woman** (American Standard Version).

New King James Version – Virtuous wife

New International Version – Wife of noble character

English Standard Version – Excellent Wife

Easy Reading Version – Perfect Wife

Amplified Version – Capable, intelligent, and virtuous woman

How can a woman be a helper? Notice the action verbs used of this virtuous wife.

- a. Does good
- b. Seeks wool and flax
- c. Works willingly with her hands
- d. Brings her food from afar
- e. Rises while it is yet night
- f. Provides food for her household, including maidservants
- g. Considers a field and buys it
- h. Plants a vineyard
- i. Girds herself with strength
- j. Strengthens her arms
- k. Perceives that her merchandise is good
- l. Lamp does not go out by night (keeps lamp burning)
- m. Stretches out her hands to the distaff (a staff for holding wool or flax in spinning)
- n. Holds the spindle (round stick with tapered ends used to form and twist the yarn)
- o. Extends her hand to the poor
- p. Reaches out her hands to the needy
- q. Cloths household with scarlet (not afraid of snow)
- r. Makes tapestry (fabric upon which colored threads are woven by hand, making a design)
- s. Cloths herself with fine linen and purple
- t. Makes linen garments
- u. Sells linen garments
- v. Supplies sashes for the merchants
- w. Opens her mouth with wisdom and kindness
- x. Watches over the ways of her household
- y. Does not eat the bread of idleness
- z. Fears the Lord

Which verses support the following qualities of the virtuous wife?

- a. Works willingly
- b. Takes care of family – food and clothing
- c. Intelligent/educated
- d. Exercises/healthy
- e. Quality work
- f. Hands on projects/sews, makes
- g. Helps others
- h. Plans ahead
- i. Nice appearance

- j. Brings honor to family
- k. Busy, not busybody
- l. Uses tongue wisely
- m. Not Idle
- n. **Fears** the Lord

To develop these qualities, start now. **Work willingly.** Learn to cook one new dish a week (not just desserts). Take on one new chore: take garbage out, keep walk swept, keep flowers watered, sweep or vacuum kitchen floor after supper, load dishwasher, clean bathrooms, wash clothes, iron, etc. Jane Francisco, the Editor-In-Chief of Good Housekeeping Magazine, tells of her growing-up years in the “From the Editor” section of the May, 2015, magazine: “Both my parents are wizards at fixing and making things. By the time they sent me out into the world, I’d learned to frame a wall, knit, crochet, sew, bake bread, quilt, navigate a boat, hang wallpaper, countersink a screw, drill a hole in most materials, jump-start a car, disconnect a toilet, hang a door, solder a pipe – even sponge-paint (it was the 1990s)...But pushing me to learn was one of the greatest gifts they ever gave me...Just having these skills in my toolbox is empowering.”

The Modern Virtuous Wife

(My attempt to “update” the description of a worthy woman.)

Who can find a great wife? She’s worth a fortune.

Her husband can trust her to be faithful to him and help him do well in life. She’s always encouraging him, not hindering or causing problems.

She’s continually on the lookout for clothes bargains and even knows how to sew. Sometimes she gathers her own food from a garden or orchard, or travels to stores that have special sales.

She gets up early and gets started on her day’s work, making sure there will be food for her family, a clean house, and clean clothes.

She watches the ads and makes profitable buys; sometimes she buys and sells online, using her profits wisely.

She exercises, trying to stay in good health.

She makes sure she does well at her various tasks, remembering the biblical admonition: “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.” Eccl. 9:10.

She helps the needy and makes certain her family has sufficient clothing to keep warm. She also manages to look presentable.

Her husband is known by many and holds a responsible position.

She makes (or buys) and sells clothes and other items.

She keeps her word which will bring her rewards in the future.

She is wise and speaks kindly to others.

She keeps watch on her family and is always busy doing something for them.

Her children think the world of her, as does her husband. They even compliment her, saying, “You are the best mom.” And “I appreciate what you are doing.”

Looks aren’t everything, but obeying God is. Obedience is what she will be known for. Her very life speaks volumes about her character. At her funeral she will be compared to the worthy woman of Proverbs 31.

Admonitions from the New Testament

The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 was a homemaker who worked very hard, even handled some business affairs, yet she was able to balance being a wife, a mother, a manager of the household, with having some business dealings. Obviously, the husband and children were her first priority. Remember the action verbs of Proverbs 31? “Homemaker” is a noun but comes from the verb “to make.” The young woman was to make a home, which action would involve a great deal of work.

Titus 2:5 – The older women were to admonish the young women “to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.” (NKJV) “Homemakers... obedient to their own husbands” is translated in other versions as follows:

Good News Translation – “good housewives who submit themselves to their husbands”

Common English Bible – “working at home, submissive to their own husbands”

New English Translation – “fulfilling their duties at home, being subject to their own husbands”

American Standard Version – “workers at home being in subjection to their own husbands”

English Standard Version -- “working at home and submissive to their own husbands”

Easy to Read Version – “to take care of their homes and be willing to serve their husbands”

Contemporary English Version – “a good homemaker who puts her own husband first”

Amplified Version – “homemakers, adapting and subordinating themselves to their husbands”

I Tim. 5:14 – “Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” “Manage the house” is also translated as follows in other versions:

Amplified – “guide the household”

New English Translation – “manage a household”

Common English Bible -- “manage their homes”

American Standard Version – “rule the household”

Contemporary English Version – “look after their families”

Easy to Read Version – “take care of their homes”

“Managing the house” involves taking action – guiding, ruling, looking after, and caring for. Following is an internet job description designed to be used in hiring a professional “homemaker.” Notice all of the tasks involved.

Sample Job Description for a Homemaker Resume

From www.coverlettersandresume.com

- Perform basic household tasks; cooking, errands-running, laundry, cleaning and maintenance
- Plan and cook meals according to family’s personal preferences while keeping nutrition value in mind
- Decorate homes in order to create an inviting environment for owners
- Dust and mop floors and wash down bathrooms
- Wash windows and clean doors
- Dust surfaces and furniture
- Vacuum and wash carpets on a periodic basis
- Perform upkeep and minor repairs of the house
- Wash dishes and flatware and organize family belongings appropriately
- Ensure food portion control (in case of working in a facility)
- Create shopping lists and purchase groceries and other household items
- Maintain budgets by developing and overseeing expenditure
- Pay house bills and keep record of credit payments
- Oversee children by feeding, bathing, grooming and dressing them
- Assist children with homework and recreational activities
- Organize social activities and facilitate play dates
- Run errands to the post office, bank or car cleaners
- Report unsafe conditions to prevent hazards
- Provide personal assistance to the elderly by helping in feeding, toileting and walking
- Iron clothes and ensure that they are folded neatly and put away properly

Even though these requirements are for a professional (paid) homemaker, they are jobs that need to be done by someone in every home (except possibly “assistance to the elderly”).

Examples of Working Women in the New Testament

Priscilla, The Tentmaker

Acts 18:3 says of Aquila and Priscilla that “they were tentmakers by trade.” Priscilla, as well as her husband Aquila, was a worker, skilled in a trade. The Bible shows that it was not unusual for ancient women to have a job. The Bible mentions women who worked in commercial trade (Prov 31:16, 24; Acts 16:14), in agriculture (Ruth 2:8), as millers (Matt 24:41), as shepherds (Gen 29:9; Ex 2:16), as tentmakers (Acts 18:3), as perfumers and cooks (I Sam 8:13), as midwives (Ex 1:15ff), and as nurses (Gen 35:8; Ex 2:7; II Sam 4:4). One Bible woman

even built towns (I Chron 7:24). In Bible times most people were poor, and poor people – both men and women, and even their children – worked hard to provide for their families. Moreover, in the Greco-Roman world many men, women, and children were slaves – and slaves worked!

Lydia, the Trader

Even some wealthy women worked (Acts 16:11-15). Lydia was a wealthy woman. She was engaged in the lucrative trade of dealing with purple cloth. The purple dye was rare, and the dyed cloth was very expensive. Only the most elite and richest people wore purple clothes, so the cloth was a symbol of power and prestige. Lydia responded to Paul's gospel message when he visited her town of Philippi. She and her household were baptized, and then she insisted that Paul and his companions stay at her house.

Numerical Value of Homemaker

I recently read a blog where a husband was honoring his wife as a Stay-At-Home Mom. He estimated what he would have to pay someone to do her job, based on national averages.

Nanny for a two-year-old son	\$36,660 a year
Cleaning Service	\$ 5,200 a year
Personal Shopper (groceries, errands)	\$13,525 a year
Chef (lunch and dinner)	\$12,480 a year
Financial assistant and doing laundry	<u>\$ 6,095 a year</u>
Annual Total	\$73,960

This husband was affirming the importance of all his wife does as a mother and a wife. He ends with the following: “But it certainly doesn't hurt to know that as a Stay-At-Home Mom, her appraised salary is nearly double my actual income. So in a very weird way, this is my way of saying how much I value my wife as the mother of my child and the one who always has my back no matter what. You are more precious than rubies. And I can't afford you.” (from www.weareglory.com)

An Older Woman Admonishing the Younger Women

Plan for the future and learn to work hard. Plan to be an obedient wife and a loving mother. Fight the inclination and temptation to be lazy. Be a helper to your husband and make a

home for your husband and your children, whether you live in a tent or a palace. If it becomes necessary for you to work outside the home, be sure that you make time for the needs of your husband and children. And may your children rise up and call you blessed, and may your husband praise you!