The Woman: An Agent of Stewardship and Societal Transformation in Proverbs 30:10-31

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Abstract

We live in a world with so many engagements in the home, Church and Society. The woman is drawn between these activities. First, she is expected to manage her home because of her strategic position as a wife, and a mother. Secondly, she is expected to commit herself to the church and society since she is also a member of the society. How can the Nigerian woman in a patriarchal society cope with these two responsibilities? Custom demands that she stays at home to manage it well but she also has something to contribute to society as one that is bestowed with God given talents. The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:10-31 first had the fear of God, worked hard to satisfy the economic need of her family and the need of the society thus fulfilled the three mandates successfully. This should teach Christian women that the mandate of stewardship as given by God should first begin with the fear of God because it will path way for transformation in the home and society. The methodology taken in this paper is theological to find out what God is saying concerning stewardship in the home and its effects on society. Secondly, the paper used an analytical study to discover the meaning of the text for today. The concern of this paper is therefore a wholistic approach which will result to transformation of the individual, home and society as seen in the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10-31. Finally, the paper concludes that failure to manage resources in the family will lead to lack of societal transformation.

Key Words: Christianity, Custom, Stewardship, Societal Transformation

Introduction

The role of the virtuous woman in moulding society is fundamental. This realization becomes more critical when it is obvious that the 21st century society is drifting towards perversion and moral decadence. This paper will interrogate key concepts like transformation, stewardship in both Old and New Testament, the qualities of the virtuous woman amongst others.

Clarification of Terms:

Transformation: The verb transform comes from the Hebrew word הפך *hapak* which means "to turn, overturn, change, transform, [and] turn back."[1]The word is used here in the context of change which influences society for good. To live in such a way that will turn over the attitude of the society for good. It is best understood in Romans 12:1-2 to mean change from bad to good behavior which is acceptable to God.

Steward/Manager: The Hebrew word for steward isשר *shar* referring to "one who manages the affairs or superintends these households of another…one who manages the domestic concerns of a family, religious house or Episcopal estate"[2] In the New Testament the Greek word for steward is *oikonomos* "which often refers to a household manager…or a steward entrusted with the responsibility of running a household".[3] It simply means "management" This connotes service or management of resources or property of a superior or master. "A steward in the Old Testament is one who is over a house"[4]. A steward is a man who serves on a large estate to manage domestic concerns, such as collecting rent, handling accounts, directing servants[5] Suleiman Jakonda reechoed this in the following words:

> Stewardship also includes serving others interest and taking responsibility for the upkeep of all resources God has given us. It is about prudent management of all resources such as personnel, finances, materials and the environment. Stewardship therefore places emphasis on equitable use of the resources and thus is concerned about the needy people in the society[6]

Management should be seen in the light of service of a servant to a master or superior resources which requires accountability. This paper seeks to address stewardship in the light of tendering service and taking good care of resources given to us by God in the home. In the home, we have two stewards or managers, these are husband and wife. Both were given a mandate of stewardship by God. The home is also an institution established by God and He has given mankind management of resources such as finance, personnel, and

[1] *Vine Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament* PC Study Bible Version 5
[2] McClintock and Strong's Study Bible
[3]Mounce's *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament words* edited by William D.Mounces (Grand Rapids:Zondervan 2006), .438-439
[4] *New Bible Dictionary* .1216
[5] *Complete Christian Dictionary for Home and Schools* 674
[6]Sulaiman Z. Jakonda *Your Kingdom Come :A Book on Wholistic Christian Development.*(Jos: Sele Printing and Publishing House,2001),179

other things in the home such as food, environmental care in the home. The woman stands as a caretaker of the home since she directs the affairs of the home. This paper considers stewardship and management interchangeably to mean the same thing because a steward is one that is entrusted with the care of either a property or a mandate by a master or a superior. Failure to manage such a mandate amounts to disappointment by the superior and lack of satisfaction by the servant. There are biblical passages that record management or stewardship of resources. We are going to study some of them beginning with the Old Testament when God gave his first mandate to man. Man in this paper will be used in its generic sense.

Stewardship in the Old Testament

God created the heavens and the earth and man is the apex of that creation. Man has a distinctive position in the universe because God created him last and he finds fulfillment in all that he has done thus he said all that I have created is good[7]. The book of Genesis 1:26 which says, "Let us make man in our image and in our likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground"[8] shows that God attached a lot of value and trust to man. In his article, Raymond Orlund asserts that, "Man stands between God above and the animals below as Gods ruling representative. Man is the crown of creation"[9] I understand this to mean that man is very important to God thus was given stewardship over the creative act of God. This for me is a position of privilege thus should be taken seriously.

Genesis 2:15 reechoed the same narrative in a slightly different way that God placed man in the garden "to work it and take care for it" It has the idea of tending or being a caretaker of the garden. It is a position of responsibility given to man to maintain and manage God's resources. Jonathan Ojo understands this statement to mean,

> Humankind responsibility goes beyond dominating or subduing the earth, but includes, among other things, to keep diligently; and safely watch over; guard jealously; protect from every external aggression, in

[7]Emiola Nihinlola *Theology Under the Mango Tree: A Handbook of African Theology* Fine Print Ikeja Lagos,63-64

[8] Genesis 2:26

[9] Raymond C. Orlund *Male –Female Equality and Male Headship Genesis 1-3* in Recovery Biblical Manhood and Womanhood edited by John Piper Wayne Grudem Crossway books ILLINIOIS 1991 P.96

> order to preserve the Garden from all danger, corruption and ultimate death[10]

This then mean that the responsibility given to man is to industriously take care of the garden thus the use of the Hebrew word עבד *abad* (work, serve) and שמר *shamar* which means "to keep, to guard, to observe to give heed"[11] This denotes that man is placed in the garden as a servant in order to protect and sustain it as a trust given by God. Ojo further illiterate that:

> The intention of God is clear enough here in terms of mankind's relation to the environment: it is purely that of stewardship/environmental ethics-man is to be the steward of the environment and not to disrespect or abuse it. The purpose of land cultivation is to make it clean in order to yield bumper harvest[12]

Good stewardship according to Ojo will benefit mankind but this care should begin with the home because everything in the home was equally given to man by God. Charity they say begins at home therefore the starting point for the care of environment as a mandate given by God should begin at home before stepping out to the environment. Good care of the home will result to dividends for the husband, children and also wider society.

Stewardship in The New Testament

Stewardship in the New Testament has various applications depending on the context it is used. It can mean "working hard, accountability and sharing"[13] as Jesus commented the worthy servant in the parable of Luke 16:10. Jakonda commented that stewardship is "an act of love" taking care for each other's needs with God's resources as reflected in Acts 4:32-36[14].

Background of Proverbs 31

The book of Proverbs is one of the wisdom literatures which emphasize the fear of God as the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom has been defined differently by scholars over the years. The book of Proverbs is been considered by many people "…as a repository of advice

[10] Jonathan Ola,Ojo *Exegetical Reflection On Genesis 2:15 And Related Texts For Credible Environmental Ethics In Nigeria* in Journal Of Creation And Environmental Care(JCEC) edited by Adetoye Faniran Vol.4,2017 Penthouse Ibadan,.109

[11] Brown, Driver and Briggs PS Bible version.5 Bible software

[12] Ojo,118

[13]Suliaman Jakonda,180

[14]Jakonda Your Kingdom Come,181

about how to navigate life."[15] It is a book that provides useful instructions that guide one on "how to avoid pitfalls and maximize success…"[16] Proverbs is "a succinct and persuasive saying proven true by experience"[17] These sayings are usually collected in its short form so that people will remember easily. The Hebrew word *hokmah* is commonly translated "Wisdom". This word comes from the root "meaning firm and well-grounded [other] related words are usually translated as "understanding" *binah,* Job 39:26*)*) "inside" *tebunah,* Ps 136:5)…wisdom is the intensely practical art of being skillful and successful in life. It is the service of life (Proverbs 1:5)"[18] Wisdom in the Old Testament can mean ability to design as was the one given to Bazalelin Exodus 31:3-4.and also metal work in 1Kings 7:14.Wisdom is also the ability to live prudently in the society. McCain and Keener states that, Biblical proverbs teaches the ancient Hebrew people practical wisdom in life such as how to take care of their family, relate with each other in the society and how to please God[19] Harrison concur with McCain thus said the book of Proverbs is "a practical handbook of prudent living" and that "it contained some remarkable insights into the relationship between the individual personally and physico-mental states"[20]This means it is a manual for daily interaction thus addresses the practical issues of the Hebrew man. McCain rightly observe that they use "humor, hyperbole, irony, and other means to communicate graphically."[21] And the intention is so that the Hebrew man will remember these sayings in a more practical way. The woman in Proverbs 31:10-31 applied practical wisdom thus she was able to transform her home both spiritually and physically. Society also benefited from her practical application of wisdom. Christian women can also glean from her and society at large.

Many people avoid reading the last chapter of the book of Proverbs because they think it is an ideal. It is not reality; but imaginary or that wisdom is being personified because no woman can accomplish what she was able to do in the home and society. They think it is not realistic to have such a woman. Some assume that this passage cannot be applied for today because the context is that of a rich family so cannot be applied today on poor

[15] Tremper Longman III. *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom of Israel.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017, p. 6.
[16] Ibid. p. 6
[17] Arnold, Bill and Bryan Beyer *Encountering the Old Testament.*2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2008), 314.
[18] William A. Dryness *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (United States: IVP Academic, 1977),189
[19] Danny McCain and Craig S. Keener, *Understanding and Appling the Scriptures* (Bukuru: ACTS, 2008), 267.
[20] RK Harrison *Introduction to Old Testament* (Michigan: William Eerdmans,1991), 1020
[21] McCain and Keener *Understand and Applying Scriptures*,267

families. My reaction to this type of assumption is that it is in the canonical books since it passed the test of canonicity we should accept it because all scriptures is God's breath and is profitable for teaching and training in righteousness. The woman in this Proverb was celebrated all over Israel by both poor and rich therefore its application is relevant for today. Proverbs 31 should be viewed as a wisdom piece for instruction on how to be faithful and become good managers of God's resources in the home and society at large. The book of Proverbs is indeed a paradigm for Christian women because it will help in first transforming their homes and society.

Analysis of Proverbs 31:10-31(NIV)

The book of Proverbs chapters 30-31 was composed by Agur and Lemuel. Little is known about these authors. The little information is that Agur was a Prophet in the same way Lemuel was (Proverbs 31:1). Norman Geisler opines that he came from "Arabian country where the worship of the true God was preserved."[22] The book of Proverbs is a teaching manual for those that are wise in Israel which was easily memorized and served as a guide for life especially for those who want to be wise.[23] The author of Proverbs concludes this chapter with the character of a virtuous noble woman which supported the saying that, a woman's wisdom builds her house (Proverbs 14:1).[24] In Proverbs 31, wisdom takes the imagery of a woman who takes care of her family, business and also people in the society. Allen F. Davis argues that "…nothing in all ancient Near Eastern literature matches this tribute [in Proverbs 31] to a woman's strength, dignity, and social power."[25] She was praised for her character by her husband, children and the needy in the society who benefited from her generosity. In Jewish circles she is known as *Eshet Hayil*, a woman of value. They remember her thus sing this poem on "Friday evening before the Kiddush [then] later this devotion became a domestic ceremony in which the family paid homage to its wife and mother…it is also chanted in Jewish weddings."[26] She is a picture of a woman with a strong character, wisdom, skill, and compassion. And we learnt five things from this woman (as seen below) and it will help to manage the home well.

Proverbs 31:10-31 was written in the acrostic meaning "the first letter of each line of poetry is the next successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Hence there are twenty-two lines, one

[22]Norman, Geisler *Popular survey of the Old Testament.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000),206
[23] Ibid
[24] Ellen F. Davis. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000. P. 149.
[25] Ibid, p. 151
[26] Jewish virtual Library www.jewishviruallllibrary.org

for each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabets"[27] It means each of the verse in the chapter begins with a word that starts with the next Hebrew letter in the alphabet. Allen observes that, the reason for this is to sing the praises of the woman (wisdom) "from A to Z."[28] Proverbs 31:10-31 shows completeness because it touches all aspects of human life thus the author tactically used a device of writing to portray its holism. The author used a unique technique considering his use of the 22 Hebrew alphabets in these verses to show that the woman in this proverb was complete thus a model for her household, women and also society at large.

Description of the Virtuous Woman - vv 10-12

This verse begins with a question leading to the description of this woman who is described differently by some English versions thus: "a wife of noble character who can find" (NIV) Who can find a virtues and capable woman (NLT) An excellent wife who can find (ESV) Who can find a wife of noble character(NET). All these versions are trying to make clear the Hebrew word חיל. Allen opines that the word *hayil* may mean physical strength and that the same word is used of Lemuel in verse 3 of Proverbs 31, it may also mean a strong moral character etc.[29] Furthermore, the word is rendered as "Military fortification, might, strength, power, able, valiant, virtuous, army host, forces, [and] riches".[30] It portrays woman of might, strength, power, able and virtues. The description of this woman shows that she is not easy to find thus the author begins with a question "who can find such a woman"? This question portrays the manner by which the Hebrews express the worth and value of the good wife.[31] Other usage of the word is also found in Proverbs 12:4 "A wife of noble character is her husband's crown but a disgraceful woman is like decay in his bones" Even though it is difficult to find women who can be praised by their husbands but it is not impossible to find such women. The author went further to say this woman is "far more than rubies" (NIV) for her worth is far above jewels (NASU). This description denotes that her price is highly valued thus difficult to find. Her value cannot be compared with money.

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[27]Arnold, Bill and Bryan Beyer *Encountering the Old Testament.* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2008), 320.

[28] Ellen F. Davis. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000. P. 151.

[29] Ellen F. Davis. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000. P. 152.

[30]*Hebrew- Greek Key Word Study Bible: Old Testament Lexical Aids* (Chattanooga: AMB 1996), 2726

[31] Edgar Jones. *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: Introduction and Commentary.* London: SCM Press LTD, 1961. P. 248.

William Mckane notes that "her husband relies on her and has complete confidence in her abilities and judgment, nor has he ever any reason to change his mind on these matters, for she is a model of benevolent constancy and brings him nothing but good and gain"[32] Her husband has full confidence in her. The Hebrew word used for confidence is בט ח *batah* which means "to attach oneself, trust, confide in, feel safe, be confident, secure"[33] It also means "to be reliant, trust, [and] be unsuspecting".[34]This denotes that her husband finds in her someone he can rely and depend on thus she cannot be a sellout. She is somebody who cannot betray the trust of her husband. In other words, he can go to sleep because he has already entrusted the home and his whole sense of existence in her care thus sits down at the city gate with high shoulders. He is confident in her because she brings him good and not evil. The two words are used in contrast to each other considering the Hebrew word ט וב *tob* which means to be "good, well, pleasing, to do well, do good, prosper" it also means "desirable, sweet (smelling), perfume, good, best.[35] It is used in contrast to the Hebrew word רע *ra* which means "evil, bad, wicked, distress, misery injury, [and] calamity."[36]These words are used in the context of her doing what is pleasing and eventually bringing about prosperity to her husband and not evil or that which will cause disaster to her husband all the days of her life. In other words she has made up her mind to do good to him as long as she lives. Proverbs 18:22 says, "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the Lord". Finding a good wife comes with favour but a bad wife comes with and regrets. The testimony of her husband concerning her gave her a good name in Israel. There are women in the Old Testament who brought evil and not good to their husbands such as Jezebel and the wife of Job.

Her Industrious Nature (vv.13-15, 27)

These verses describe her hard work in terms of what she does with her hands. Allen observes that "much emphasis is placed upon this woman's industriousness in up building the household with the work of her own hands"[37] She first does her selection of the best "wool and flax and works with eager hands" (vs 13). The Hebrew word used here is עשה asah meaning "to do, to work, to make, to produce, to prepare [and] to bring about"[38] This suggests that she personally do the work and does it with her hands so that the family will

[32] William Mckane. *Proverbs: A New Approach.* London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970. p. 666.
[33]Ibid p.1201
[34]Vine Old Testament PS Soft wares
[35] *Hebrew- Greek Key Word Study Bible: Old Testament Lexical Aids* (Chattanooga: AMB 1996),1943
[36]Ibid,2014
[37] Ellen F. Davis. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000. P. 153.
[38] Brown, Driver and Briggs *PS Bible version 5 Bible* software

keep warm. How then is her attitude towards the work? It is done with an eager hand. The Hebrew word eager is חפץ *hepes* meaning "desire, delight, pleasure"[39] Her attitude towards the work is done with a willing hands and heart. It is not out of compulsion but from a genuine heart, the hand stretch forth to do the work. Her hand is ever ready and willing to do the work. Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord not men". That is the attitude of this woman. She is a model who displays a continuous industry of an idle wife who "uses the products of other lands to create beauty and variety in food and furnishings rather than be content with the nearest supplies available."[40] She is described like "merchant ships that bring her food from afar". Verse 27b also says "she does not eat the bread of idleness". The Hebrew word used here is עצלות *aslut* which means "sluggishness, laziness"[41] suggests she is an adventurous woman not a liability who is not limited to her own local setting but reach out to meet the needs of her family no matter the distance. "She treats her advantages not as a means to self-indulgence but as a widening of her responsibility. …for she is a tireless worker…"[42], who ensures that there is food on her family's table. Food is the basic need of every family thus; she provides not only food but clothing for the members of her family and servants (verses 13-15, 19, 21-22).[43] She makes sure everything is properly in place before stepping out of the house. To achieve this, she gets up while it is still dark to provide food for the family and portions for her servant girls". This means she wakes up very early in the morning when others are still enjoying their sleep with the aim of feeding her family. She makes sure that they are not hungry as she goes out for her business. She also makes sure that the home is properly arranged thus she gives her servant girls work to do, hence, the home is well organized even in her absence. That means equitable distribution of labour in the house. She is in control of everything in her family affairs and nothing takes her by surprise because she monitors everything that transpires (vs 27b).

Nature of Her Stewardship Vs.16-18, 24 Vs 21-22

[39] *Hebrew- Greek Key Word Study Bible: Old Testament Lexical Aids* (Chattanooga: AMB 1996),1939

[40] Edgar Jones. *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: Introduction and Commentary*. London: SCM Press LTD, 1961. P. 249.

[41] *Hebrew- Greek Key Word Study Bible: Old Testament Lexical Aids* (Chattanooga: AMB 1996), 1993.

[42] Derek Kidner. Proverbs: *An Introduction and Commentary*. London: The Tyndale Press, 1968.. p. 183.

[43] Tewoldemedhin Habtu. *"Proverbs" African Bible Commentary.* Eds. Tokumboh Adeyemo et al. Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006. P. 812.

She is an excellent manager who managed her business well. Edgar Jones opines that "the ideal wife is an excellent manager of the household finances, she provides clothing for the family, shares in the management of the estate…"[44] As a good business woman she buys fields and out of her personal earnings also ploughs the fields into her vineyard. She is responsible in her domain, and her proficiency goes beyond home management to the management of lands (verse 16).[45] This is all done for the economic enhancement of the family. She is not a lazy tool but one who works tirelessly with her hand to make a living. She is an intelligent, industrious, trustworthy and kindhearted woman who "adds dignity to the family and has foresight and prudence"[46] She makes sure that her business is profitable thus the use of the Hebrew word טוב *tob* which means "to be good, well, pleasing, to do well, do good, prosper, desirable"[47] Indeed she is a good example of a wise woman because of her wise choose of investment which will result to profit not loss. She is also involved in making linen garments for sell at whole sell price. This means she is also empowering others to make profit. She is indeed an agent of economic transformation to willing merchants in the community.

She is a woman of foresight for family needs because season of snow was one of the seasons that were life threatening for the family just like winter season is to us in Nigeria. She has a foreknowledge of such a season so prepares for it thus had no reason to fear. She makes adequate provision of warm clothing in form of scarlet for all of them. Kathleen A. Farmer notes that "the range of this ideal woman's abilities and the reservoirs of energy and endurance from which she draws are truly formidable." She organizes, oversees and meets the need of a large estate.[48] No wander her husband sits at the gate with confidence because of the wisdom of his wife who prepares ahead of time. His sitting down at the gate has raised a problem among women who view him as lazy and dependent on his wife. The gate according to the context of Israelite society is a place of honour where men make important decisions on important issues that affect the society so this man is there on his own right as a man of honour and the effort of his wife adds to his integrity at the gate.

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[44] Edgar Jones. *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: Introduction and Commentary.* London: SCM Press LTD, 1961. P. 247.

[45] Derek Kidner. Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary. London: The Tyndale Press, 1968.. p. 183.

[46] Duane A. Garrett. *Proverbs" Holman Concise Bible Commentary.* Ed. David S. Dockery. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998. P. 235-242.

[47] *Hebrew- Greek Key Word Study Bible: Old Testament Lexical Aids* (Chattanooga: AMB 1996), p. 1943.

[48] Kathleen A. Farmer. *Who Knows What is Good: A Commentary on the Book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.* Grand Rapids: Williams B. Erdmann Publishing Company, 1991. P. 124-125.

Concern to the poor in Society v. 20

Habtu observes that she cares for the poor.[49] The wisdom and hard work of this woman makes her to open her hands to the needy. Farmer sees the openness of her hands to the poor and needy as the "best of all, in addition to all she does…"[50] Open her hands here should not be interpreted literally but it simply means helping the needy with material resources. Recognizing their needs for help and stepping out to meet their needs like Dorcas who met the needs of the widows thus was remembered by her good works and raised to life. The success in her business is not only for the benefit of her immediate family but also to the needy. Her wisdom and success in business affected others in the society. She is an agent of transformation at home with her husband, children and also the needy in the society. She was not greedy but generous like Dorcas in Acts.

Husband is Honored at the Gate v. 23

The husband of the virtuous woman is well known at the city gate. Habtu argues that the phrase *at the city gate* is repeated in verse 31, this stresses that the woman has crown her husband with public honor.[51] The city gate also called town gate or town hall was well known for "business and legal transaction, where witnesses were readily available"[52] On his part, Mckane also notes that the city gates are the places where people gathered to make deliberations of public matter, they are places where legal and political issues are been discussed.[53] Farmer notes that it appears that the husband of this virtuous "is freed by his wife's activities to participate in the legal and judicial activities that take place within the city gate."[54] In the Book of Ruth, the elders assembled at the gate to witness the transaction of selling a piece of land that belongs to Elimeleck to Boaz (Ruth 4:11) .The gate was a place of prestige because elders sit to make decisions and administer issues arising from the community. This shows that the unnamed husband of the virtuous woman was a man of caliber, well known and thus respected at the city gate. The Hebrew used for that is יִדָּה

[49] Tewoldemedhin Habtu. *"Proverbs" African Bible Commentary.* Eds. Tokumboh Adeyemo et al. Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006. P. 812.
[50] Kathleen A. Farmer. *Who Knows What is Good: A Commentary on the Book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.* Grand Rapids: Williams B. Erdmann Publishing Company, 1991. P. 125.
[51] Tewoldemedhin Habtu. *"Proverbs" African Bible Commentary.* Eds. Tokumboh Adeyemo et al. Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006. P. 812.
[52] New International *Study Bible Notes*(NIV),369
[53] William Mckane. *Proverbs: A New Approach.* London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970. p. 669.
[54] Kathleen A. Farmer. *Who Knows What is Good: A Commentary on the Book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.* Grand Rapids: Williams B. Erdmann Publishing Company, 1991. P. 124-125.

yada meaning to be "known, make oneself known, to cause to know, to be well known"[55] This man has a sit among the council of elders. The Hebrew word used for elders here is זקן *zaqen* meaning "elder, leader dignitary, old age"[56] This denotes that for one to be member he must be a man above reproach. This man was honoured in this gate because of his wife thus making a good name for her among dignitaries thereby becoming a model for people and women in the society.

Spiritual Quality –vv.25-27, 30

This woman is described as one who is clothed with strength and dignity. The Hebrew word used is חדר *hadar* meaning "majesty, splendor, glory, [and] nobility"[57] She is not clothed with shame and disgrace because she prepares for the future and security of her household ahead of time. She is a contrast of a woman who brings disgrace to her husband. She also has self-control over her tongue thus speaks with wisdom. James 3:3-6 reminds us of the powerful influence of the tongue and the perversity of the tongue and that anyone who is able to control it can win and be successful in other areas of life. She is faithful and an instructor meaning she is a good teacher and conversant with the Torah thus her children appreciate her and call her blessed. Above all, she is a woman who fears the Lord. Derek Kidner says the root to her spiritual quality is the fear of the Lord. He also notes that the fear of the Lord "is the picture of a godliness that is severely practical, of values that are sound and humane, and of a success that has been most diligently earned."[58]

Her Reward vv. 28-31

Her first reward comes from the family who called her "blessed" meaning "happy". Her children gave her a good title "happy woman". They grow up and discovered the priority and care she placed on them and the entire home thus praised her with the title happy woman. Her husband also joined in the praise thus "many women do noble things, but you surpass them all" (v. 29). Habtu argues that this it is not surprising that he children called her blessed and her husband also join them in celebrate her. "In fact he even goes further and adds, Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all (31:29)."[59] This

[55] *Hebrew- Greek Key Word Study Bible: Old Testament Lexical Aids* Chattanooga: AMB 1996,1947

[56]Ibid ,1932

[57] *Hebrew- Greek Key Word Study Bible: Old Testament Lexical Aids* Chattanooga: AMB 1996, 1927

[58] Derek Kidner. An Introduction to Wisdom Literature: The Wisdom of Proverbs, Jobs & Ecclesiastes. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1985. p. 36.

[59] Tewoldemedhin Habtu. *"Proverbs" African Bible Commentary.* Eds. Tokumboh Adeyemo et al. Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006. P. 812.

means that there are women who have done similar good deeds but this woman outdo all of them. He used some expressions to describe her such as "Charm is deceptive and Beauty is fleeting but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (v. 30). Attraction and beauty can be misleading and will pass away but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Her husband praised her because she fears the Lord. The secret behind her success in the home, business and help to the needy is because she fears the Lord. Her good works in the home gave her husband a position of honour in the sit of elders at the gate. This woman gain popularity and praise because of her relationship with God.

Transformation for The Christian Woman Today

The starting point to good stewardship that will lead to transformation of society is first the fear of God like the virtuous woman who feared God and He gave her the wisdom to manage her home and also transform the wellbeing her society as well. We live in a world where good people are difficult to find. In the same way good, women with noble character are not easy to find in a society like Nigeria. That is not to say they do not exist but they are hard to find. In the same way, most people do not believe that virtues women with the type of characteristics mentioned above can be found on this planet earth. My quick response to this conclusion is that even if they assume it is an ideal, it is there in the bible for us to learn and to follow this example since all scriptures is God's breath profitable for teaching and learning in righteousness.

The Home was the starting point of transformation for the woman in this passage because it is a trust given to her by God to manage. Women are the first custodians of the home thus they are expected to add value to their homes thereby fulfilling their primary assignments and first call as suitable helpers and also mothers to the children. The home is an opportunity of service to the first institution established by God. Unfortunately some women have made names in the church and also various places of work in the society yet failed in the home which is a complete contrast with the woman of Proverbs 31.

The virtues woman is a model for Christian women today because of her priority first to her husband as a result he had confidence in her. Christian women are expected to be trust worthy to their husbands such that their husbands will make good pronouncement concerning them even when they are absent.

Christian women should not be only hard working in the community and church neglecting their first point of duty which is serving the physical needs of their children such as clothing and food like the woman in this passage. She plans ahead to meet the needs of the family which is exhibited through hard work in profitable business

investment. This is a proof of practical wisdom. Her ability to carve out responsibility for each member of the family shows she is in control of the home. This is an aspect of good training for the children on how to manage their own families in the future. This is a model for Christian women to emulate instead of leaving the home without direction and concentrating in gorgeous appearance in public places while their families are languishing in hunger. This woman's children and husband recognized her contribution in the home thus called her a happy woman. This title of honour women should desire to have in the home not only in the church and society. She was also able to transform society because of her care for the needy. Her good stewardship yielded much thus the needy benefitted thereby bringing about transformation of their lives.

The impact of this woman went beyond the boundaries of her home to the society because her husband was honoured in the city gate among his equals. I suppose that other men will point to this woman as a model to their wives. Her stewardship in the home has raised her husband to a position of honour in the gate where important decisions are carried out. She was able to record this success because she feared the Lord. Good stewardship and management must begin with the fear of the Lord and then it will have an effect in the home church and then the society

Conclusion

Today so many children are roaming the streets without home training probably because some women have not taken care of their families as priority. On the other hand some women are confined to the shore of their homes without outside transformation probably because of traditional husband which limits a woman to domestic chore. The woman in Proverbs 31:10-31 was able to transform her husband and children. She also breaks patriarchy by way of moving out of her home to venture business. Her proceeds were used to help the poor in the society thereby making an impact in the lives of the needy. In a patriarchal society she was remembered and honoured. This is a lesson for Christian women that transformation should first begin with the individual, family then the entire society. This paper conclude that failure to manage resources in the family will lead to lack of societal transformation therefore women are admonished to care for their first constituency which is the home and then society will be transformed.

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