

# COVENANT KEEPERS

"Dedicated To Strengthening Marriages Through Biblical Principles"

Volume 25 – Issue 2

Fall Edition

## An Excellent Wife

There are so many pressures and expectations that are placed upon wives today. Some think that a wife should simply be silent, submissive, and out of the way. Others think she should be a social, business, or political activist. However, the most important question every wife should ask herself is much more important than what other people think. The real question is what kind of wife does God want me to be? What is *His* expectation of me?

God has made His expectations clear in the scriptures. In the book of Proverbs, Solomon declared, "*An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones*" (Prov. 12:4). What does Solomon mean when he speaks about an excellent wife? Is this not God's expectation for a wife? Yes, it is!

### What does it mean to be an excellent wife?

The Hebrew word *excellent* has several different meanings depending on the context in which the word is found. It is translated "*virtuous*" in Ruth 3:11 or "*to do worthily*" in Ruth 4:11. It is also translated "*to be girded with strength*" in 1 Samuel 2:4, or "*to do valiantly or to be mighty*" in Num. 24:18. In addition, Jethro used this word *excellent* when he encouraged Moses to choose *able* men who feared God, men of truth, who hated covetousness to help him (Ex. 18:21). In all of these references God is defining the specific behavior of someone who has excellent character. This godly character is the most fundamental building block of any

person's life and the most important building block of any marriage.

### Where does a wife get a strong and virtuous character?

Character is the sum total of your disposition, thoughts, desires, and actions. It is not determined by one failure or one act of kindness. It is the result of daily choices. You remember that David was called a man after God's heart even though he failed miserably with Bathsheba (1 Sam. 13:14). Even though King Ahab did the noble thing of not leaving his men on the battlefield, he is described as a man of evil and rebellious character (1 Kings 22:35; 1 Kings 16:33).

With these two examples you can see that character is influenced and developed by the choices that you continually make daily. Daniel "*purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself*" while in Babylon. This choice was foundational to the character and integrity of his entire life (Dan. 1:8). He was also called a man who possessed an excellent spirit (Dan. 5:12). Even a godless man like King Belshazzar acknowledged that Daniel was a man in whom the Spirit of God dwelt, and that he possessed excellent wisdom (Dan. 5:13-14).

True godly character results from the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. He is the One who teaches, convicts, and conforms you into the image of Christ. The Prophet Habakkuk said, "*The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills*" (Hab. 3:19). The word *strength* in this verse is the same word translated excellent and virtuous in the Old Testament. Habakkuk is literally saying that the Lord is the

One who enables excellence in his life.



***An excellent wife is the crown of her husband!***

If you want to be an excellent wife you must find your strength and virtue in your personal relationship with the Lord. He is the only One who can give you the strength of godly character in the midst of this perverse generation in which we live today. He is the only One who can give you a virtuous disposition, the desires, and actions that will make you a blessing to your husband, your children, and to all who are around you.

### Note some examples of what it means to be an excellent wife.

**1. Ruth, the Moabitess.** She was a Gentile woman that the Bible recognizes as a person of excellence and virtue despite tragedy and extreme hardship. After the death of her husband, Ruth was given the option of abandoning her mother-in-law Naomi who had also lost her husband. Instead, she chose to help her mother-in-law because of her commitment to the God of Israel. Here are her words to Naomi as she pledges herself to stay and help her. Ruth said: "*Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my*

**"She is your companion and your wife by covenant" Mal. 2:14**

people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me” (Ruth 1:16-17). What a declaration of love and commitment to Naomi! These words reveal her excellent character.

Are you experiencing extreme hardship or tragedy in your life? What will sustain you during these difficult times? What is going to help you make the correct decisions needed in your life? What will see you through the distress of the moment? You will only be sustained as you depend upon the Lord and make your commitment to never leave His side. This is the heart and behavior of a woman of excellence and virtue. What would have happened to Ruth if she didn't have an excellent and virtuous character? She would never have experienced the great blessings that God had in store for her. She would have never met or married Boaz who also had an excellent, virtuous, and godly character. She would never have become a part of the genealogy of King David, and of the promised Messiah. No one knows what will result from the love and kindness we show to others!

## **2. Hannah, the wife of Elkanah.**

Hannah was also a woman of strength and virtue in the face of her inability to have children. The Scripture tells us that she was *“in bitterness of soul”* and that her heart was *“grieved”* and that she *“wept in anguish”* (1 Sam. 1:8; 10). What did Hannah do in the midst of her grief and sorrow? She prayed! This is what an excellent and virtuous wife does, she prays! Prayer was how she received strength to get up every day and do what she needed to do. Prayer is what kept Hannah from resentment and bitterness toward God. Prayer is what kept her from becoming harsh and complaining against her husband even though she was greatly grieved by her circumstances. How does prayer enable this kind of strength? David explained how prayer became his source of strength as he was

chased by King Saul for years. He said, *“In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold with strength in my soul”* (Ps. 138:3).

If you want to become an excellent wife and mother, you need to become a woman of prayer. Prayer is where you will find the strength to endure your trials in life, and the ability to do what God commands. Luke tells us that Jesus constantly taught that *“men always ought to pray and not lose heart”* (Luke 18:1). The word *pray* is in the present tense which means that we must continually pray if we don't want to lose heart.

Are you in a difficult time in your life today? If you do not want to lose heart in the midst of the hardships that you are experiencing, then you must pray. As Paul commanded, *“Pray without ceasing”* (1 Thess. 5:17). But many times, we stop praying when times are tough. Why? We stop praying because we start griping, complaining, and wringing our hands in anxiety. Instead, double your efforts in prayer, and you will see the results. He will fill your heart with His strength!

God not only gave Hannah strength to endure her trials, but He also gave her strength to conceive and to have the child she wanted.

## **3. Abigail, the wife of Nabal.**

She was a woman of excellence and strength proven by her ability to live graciously with Nabal, an evil and foolish husband. She also proved her virtue and character by coming to David and stopping him from killing her husband. How did she do this?

David's men had protected the flocks of Nabal from thieves and wild animals, but when David asked for a voluntary gift for the services rendered, Nabal refused and reviled and mocked David and his men (1 Sam. 25:4-14). David got very angry and determined to kill Nabal and every male in his house. When Abigail heard of her husband's disrespect, she took supplies and went to David and persuaded him not to take vengeance on Nabal. Scripture

declares, *“Now when Abigail saw David, she hastened to dismount from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground. So she fell at his feet and said: ‘On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be! And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant.... Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant. For the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the LORD, and evil is not found in you throughout your days”* (1 Sam. 25:23-24; 25:28). David was stopped in his tracks and realized what he was about to do was wrong, he turned around and went home. He admitted to Abigail, *“Blessed is the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand”* (1 Sam. 25:32-33).

If you want to become an excellent wife, then you must become a peacemaker like Abigail. There are so many conflicts that happen in families and homes that require someone to stand up and speak up for what is right. You need to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). This is a godly woman of strength!

## **4. Deborah, the Prophetess.**

She was a woman of strength and valor when all the men of Israel were cowering in fear and refusing to stand and fight for their nation. God had commanded Barak, the leader in Israel, to go out and confront Sisera and the Canaanite armies who possessed 900 chariots and thousands of men. But Barak said to Deborah, *“If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go”* (Judges 4:8)! Deborah replied, *“I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman”* (Judges 4:9).

God did go up with the armies of Israel and a great victory was won.

God sent a huge rain storm so that the chariots of Sisera got stuck in the mud flow (Judges 5:4-5; 20-21). This victory was won because of the faith and obedience of Deborah, not Barak. Deborah is a powerful example of a woman of excellence, strength, and courage.

This is an example that you want to follow. If your husband or any man won't do what they are called to do, then you must always stand for righteousness and be obedient to God. Character and virtue will always motivate you to obey God's call upon your heart. Every believer, it makes no difference if you are a man or a woman, must do what God has commanded them to do. Each of us are personally responsible to listen to God and follow His direction. God told Deborah to remind Barak of what he had already been told to do. See the past tense used in her direction to him (Judges 4:6). By Deborah listening and obeying God's direction to her, she fulfilled her responsibility.

Note the similar requirement by Jesus to hear and obey Him! *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"* (Rev. 3:20-22). In addition, Jesus also said, *"And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day"* (John 12:47-48). Character, strength, and virtue motivates each of us to act when others will not. Your obedience to God's direction, will ultimately determine one day how you will be judged by the Father.

**5. Mary, the mother of Jesus.** Mary revealed that she was a woman of excellence in so many ways. First, she

believed God when the angel told her that she would bear the Christ child. She had no idea how this all could happen, but she said, *"Let it be to me according to Your word"* (Luke 1:38). God said it, and she believed it. Trusting God when you have no idea of how God is going to fulfill His promises in your life is a fruit of the Spirit. Because of your loving and surrendered relationship with the Father, you will trust that what He has promised, He is also able to do (Rom. 4:20-21). Faith allows you to rest in Him without anxiety and questions. What has God promised to you? A woman of excellence will trust Him to do it.

Another very important proof that Mary was a woman of excellence and strength was her ability to rest in God's approval of her. God's angel communicated to her His thought about her, *"Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women"* (Luke 1:28). She had to endure the looks and stares of a lot of people who would wonder, how she could be pregnant without living a promiscuous lifestyle. However, she held her head up high, because she knew the truth. Think of how difficult Mary's life must have been. She would have had to explain her pregnancy to Joseph, her parents, her siblings, her neighbors, and anyone who knew her. Would they believe her, or doubt and judge her? This must have been so difficult for her. I believe God chose Mary because He knew she could handle the questions about her character. God knew she was a virtuous woman who was filled with an inner strength to withstand all of the pressure and condemnation. It must have been overwhelming at times!

Throughout your life you are also going to have people judge you and question your motives and behavior. How will you handle it? If you are a woman of excellence, virtue and strength, you will do just fine. This is what character is. It is not just who you are, but who *you know* you are! Paul said of himself, *"But with me it*

*is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God"* (1 Cor. 4:3-5).

Paul also told the Corinthians in his second epistle what he trusted in when they questioned his love for them. He said, *"God knows"* (2 Cor. 11:11)! Paul rested in the fact that God knew all his motives! Can you rest here? Do you find peace in the fact that God knows everything about you, your motives, and the reasons why you have acted the way you have? Is it a small thing to you when others judge you and question your motives or behavior? Can you stand confident in the fact that God knows your heart? This confidence is essential! If it is a big thing to you when people condemn you, then life will be very difficult for you, because you will constantly pursue the applause of man more than the approval of God. This will cause you to be a people pleaser, and not a Father pleaser. If you can't rest in what God knows, then you will try to justify yourself to everyone who questions you. Ask God to make you a woman of excellence and strength in this area of your life. It is a process. It won't happen overnight. Remember, character is the result of your daily choices. So, take one day at a time and seek His approval today.

### **But what happens if you aren't an excellent wife?**

Let me state the proverb again. *"An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones"* (Prov. 12:4). There are real consequences for a wife not being strong and virtuous. The word *rotteness* is a Hebrew word that means something which brings decay or infection. This term is

obviously figurative of what takes place in a marriage when a wife lives in a non-virtuous or shameful way. Her lack of trust in God, pursuing the approval of people, failure to hear and obey Him, failure to pray, or lack of commitment to Christ will surely bring infection that will slowly decay the foundation of her marriage. Eve is probably the most obvious example of this. Look at the destruction she brought on her husband, family, and the entire world! Her unbelief and disobedience have brought every imaginable evil into this world. She questioned God's Word, decided to do what she pleased, and turned from following His command.

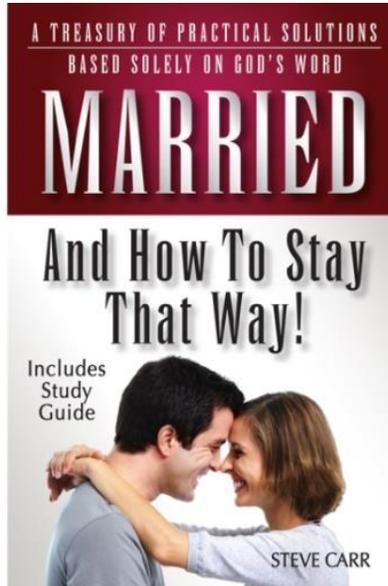
For those who place all the responsibility for a failed marriage upon the husband, and allow wives to escape all responsibility, this verse in Proverbs is a wake-up call to balance the understanding of what can cause the destruction of a marriage. In my experience of counseling couples for more than 45 years, sometimes the dissolution of a marriage is primarily the husband's fault. Other times it is equally the husband and the wife's fault, and sometimes it is primarily the wife's fault. Please keep this truth in mind.

What's essential is that both a husband and a wife need to be brutally honest with themselves and ask the Lord to show them the beam in their own eye, concerning their own faults. They must do this before they try to take the splinter out of their spouse's eye. Jesus said it this way. *"Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye"* (Matthew 7:5). If we would obey this simple instruction, we would all have much happier marriages. When Jesus said do this first, He means it. Do this first!

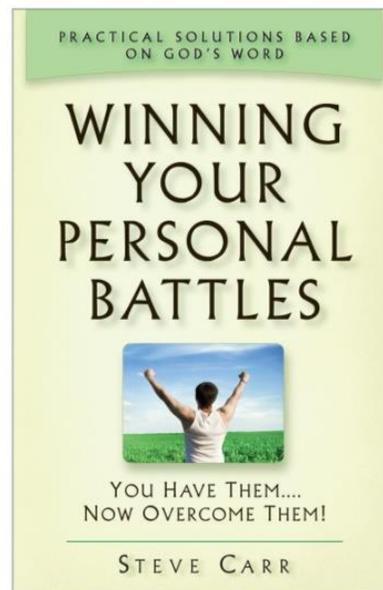
COVENANT KEEPERS © 2019

Please visit our website [www.covenantkeepers.org](http://www.covenantkeepers.org) for a complete list of available resources and over 50 articles to help you and your marriage.

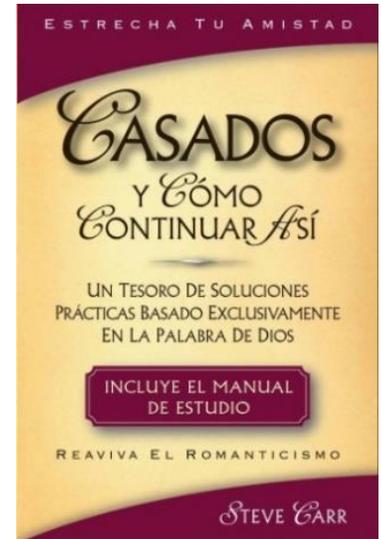
**Married And How To Stay That Way:** (New updated version includes study guide.)



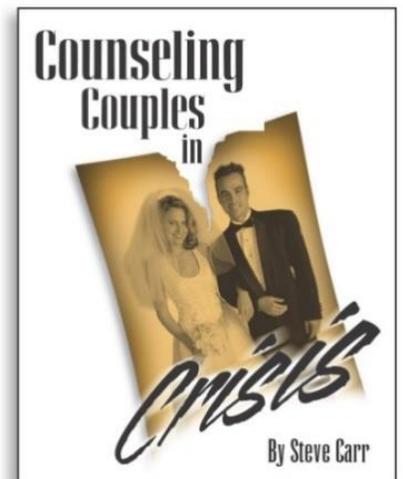
**Winning Your Personal Battles:** This is an invaluable resource that deals with the common struggles we all battle with throughout our lives.



**Spanish Edition of Married and How To Stay That Way!** (Study Guide included).



**Counselor Training Manual:** The *Counseling Couples in Crisis* manual with accompanying video training material has been developed for pastors and lay counselors to assist them to counsel couples in crisis.



**Telephone orders:** (805) 489-9088  
Have your VISA or MasterCard ready.

**E-mail orders:** Send all shipping and credit card information to:  
[scarrck@lightspeed.net](mailto:scarrck@lightspeed.net)

**Internet orders:** [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

**Postal orders:** Pastor Steve Carr, PO Box 463, Arroyo Grande, CA 93421

**Book Prices:** See our website  
[www.covenantkeepers.org](http://www.covenantkeepers.org)