

Introduction

Some years ago I was introduced to Proverbs 31, and in particular, the Proverbs 31 Woman. Pastor Joan Gordon from Heatherton Christian Resource Centre in Victoria, Australia was speaking about what it means to be a Proverbs 31 Woman to a group of business women at an event the church was running one evening.

I already had stirred up in me a passion to mix ministry with business and to reach out to business people so learning about this particular book in the Bible struck a chord with me. But it was a few years later before I decided to really study that chapter in the Bible, and from that I developed my blog Proverbs31-Woman.com. I did the study for two reasons – to experiment with the Wordpress blogging software I had not used before, and to satisfy my desire to understand that book of the Bible.

I did very little to promote the blog, other than link it with existing blogs I owned and register it with a few blog directories. But Google picked it up – probably because of the domain name, and a journalist in the US found a reference to leadership and the use of alcohol (which is actually before the passage about the Proverbs 31 woman); he referenced it on his blog and suddenly the visitors to my blog grew, in the thousands.

It seems that the year of 2006 became the Proverbs 31 Woman year and many new blogs popped up all over the web with that particular theme in mind – some doing studies as I had, others just loosely referring to it in their daily thoughts and activities. It is

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interesting to note that in January of 2006 all I could find on the web were copies of the Proverbs on several web sites but apart from a couple of sites that had actual ministries attached to them, there appeared to be no online studies or devotionals in the way that I began.

The great thing about the Internet is that you can make some really valuable connections and friendships with people you would never otherwise get to meet, and I have been so blessed to meet (virtually) Rev Ora Stearns Smith and Beverly Mahone, and a number of other wonderful Christian ladies, mainly from the US. We had all been members of the Christian Business Women's Network at Ryze.com, which later moved to another web location at BusinessByGrace.com, led by Regina Baker, and it was at CBWN that we met. Many of us are also now members of Shoutlife.com which is a Christian Blog and Social Network.

I have met some really wonderful Christian Business Women online – it is so good to be in the company of God-fearing women. And working alone at home daily has not held the isolation and depression factors for me that some find, simply because I have been able to connect with many wonderful people online during my time in front of my computer.

I asked Ora and Beverly if they would like to share with you what the Proverbs 31 Woman means to them and they very kindly agreed.

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The Proverbs 31 Woman . . .

What a beautiful manifestation of a virtuous woman of God! Obviously, she believed her God was definitely speaking to her when He said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness and let them have dominion . . . male and female created He them. . . And God blessed them and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion . . . (Genesis 1:26-28).

I have to admit that the Proverbs 31 Woman is my kind of gurrll. This beautiful, significant, valued and extraordinary woman is an empowering look at what a free woman who truly knows her God can be and can do. She fears her God. And she has not allowed the opinions of her day to deny or defy her very own uniqueness.

What I like about her most is that even though she is a woman of great responsibilities and phenomenal talents, gifts, skills, wisdom and entrepreneurship, she knows that the key to all her accomplishments, success and influence; the key to her worth and value; the key to her strength, staying-power, and her very own identity . . . is in her intimacy with her God! This is one of the greatest lessons I have learned and personally applied in my own life . . . and I have seen the absolute faithfulness of my God in the midst of every raging storm! And I have learned that I am made suitable; that is, I am gloriously fashioned to reign in Christ and with Christ. Yes, I have learned that there is no room in my life for defeat because there is a Life . . . in me . . . that has never been defeated!

Rev. Ora Stearns Smith

Empowering Women to Rise out of the Ashes . . . To Reign in the Kingdom!
 Founder, Ora International. Author of *Divinely Framed*
www.OraIntl.org www.DivinelyFramed.com

On March 27, 2006, I took a leap of faith. No, I was actually pushed. After nearly five years on job number 15, I was fired. How could this happen to a middle age woman, a veteran in the television news business, who had so much left to give? Didn't they care that I was a single parent with a child that I still had to take care of? Didn't it bother them that they would be losing an important minority voice in the community?

In hindsight, it turned out to be the day a heavy burden was lifted off my shoulders because I knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that I was being obedient to God and not to man. My firing was the result of many prayers I had made to God asking him to order my steps and lead me. God shoved me---no question about it. He told me if I really trusted Him, it was time to come out of my comfort zone and move on to the next level. My ministry at that television station was completed and it was time to move on according to His will.

The first couple of days after my untimely termination, my daughter kept apologizing for what she called "being selfish." She told me she had been praying a long time that God would make it possible to have me at home when she got home from school. That's because ever since she was about eight years old, I had a schedule that had me working when she came home from school and when I came home from work, she was sound asleep. My daughter learned that God does, indeed, answer prayer. I learned the same thing but I know now that our prayers aren't always answered the way we expect them to be.

Meanwhile, God has remained true to His promises. He said He would never leave nor forsake me. Today, I am a best selling author and have established myself as a media coach in the world of work-at-home-moms. God continues to show me daily that my "worth is more than rubies".*

Beverly Mahone is a veteran journalist, author and motivational speaker who writes about issues affecting middle-aged women in her best selling book, Whatever! A Baby Boomer's Journey Into Middle Age. In addition, Beverly is a work-at-home-mom who is using her media expertise to train individuals how to market themselves to radio, television and newspapers professionals.

Beverly currently resides in North Carolina with her husband and teenage daughter. She describes herself as a "Babyboomer Diva on the Move" who has a passion for God and family. Her favourites are Psalm 121 and Philippians 4-13 and her favourite poem is The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost.

**Excerpts of this writing were taken from Ms. Mahone's book Whatever! A Baby Boomer's Journey Into Middle Age.*

Background

In my teens I constantly dreamed of running my own business. I had grown up in a family of four children, with parents who struggled financially. We lived in a rented home – mum and dad had lost the opportunity of owning their own home when dad lost his job not long after they got married. They did buy a block of land prior to their marriage but had to sell it when mum became pregnant with me very soon after they married and that set the path for their remaining lifestyle for the years to come.

My sisters and I would talk about what we could do when we grew up; the shop we might own and what each of us would bring to it. We never included our brother in these discussions, after all, he was a boy, and somewhat younger than we were. Girls just didn't mix with boys that were younger than them at that age.

Once married I forgot those dreams for a while and life took over – a mortgage, a home, a baby, then another and another. Time moved on and my heart and mind began to turn towards those dreams again, and I prayed and cried out to God for His help. I started up businesses at home with a neighbour across the road from me, when I had my three daughters and Angela was less than a year old. But eventually I had to return back to a fulltime job to contribute to the household income and support my family, and my dreams had to be put aside yet again. I was then nearing 30 years of age. It was a few years later before a new opportunity arose, this

time using skills and abilities I had been developing in the corporate world, on and off, for over twenty years.

This book is about my own desire to grow and become a Proverbs 31 Woman and of my journey as a Christian Business Woman, the challenges and successes, and the recognition that God was directing me. If you are not a Christian, please do not think this book could not apply to you. I encourage you to keep reading because you'll find that I am not much different from you and what I have achieved, you can also. I hope you will enjoy sharing the journey and that my story may inspire you to keep forging ahead with the dreams that have been implanted within you.

May I also say that my loving husband Graham always believed in me and encouraged me, listened to me and discussed with me my dreams, visions, plans, wants and needs. He has also prayed with me and this has been so important – knowing I had my husband's support and encouragement, and his prayers.

Also our five daughters have each helped in one way or another in my home business, during their growing up. From sitting on the lounge room floor and being a production line for a large mail out, or a show bag stuffing session for a conference, which filled both our lounge room and dining room, to working individually in my office as an assistant for short periods of time, and in the case of one daughter, for almost two years.

The following chapters of this book relate to my writings at www.proverbs31-woman.com, and include my comments on that study and part of my story as to how each section fit into my daily life.