“Women need their husbands to love and cherish them. This book provides guidance for husbands to make their prayers meaningful and sustaining for the marriage relationship.”

—LINDA HITCHCOCK, Senior Vice President, IndyMac Bank

“Mark’s wise insights into Proverbs 31 have raised my awareness of the many ways my wife blesses me and our children. Reading this book has equipped me to pray more specifically for the Lord’s continued work in her life.”

—GORDON SPAUGH, Area Executive, Branch Banking and Trust Co.
How to Pray for Your Wife

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Published by Crossway Books
a publishing ministry of
Good News Publishers
1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Cover design: Josh Dennis

First printing 2006

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Weathers, Mark A., 1969–
How to pray for your wife : a 31-day guide / Mark A. Weathers.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 10: 1-58134-786-3 (tpb)
BV4528.3.W43 2006
242'.6425—dc22 2006011337
INTRODUCTION

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Genesis 2:24

I see a unique tree every day while traveling to the church building where I minister. It’s a dogwood, and for the majority of the year it looks like any other dogwood in the southeast—slender divided trunk with a bushy green top. But this past spring it caught me off guard as it was coming into full bloom. The tree boasted of both white and pink blossoms intermingled throughout its branches.

It then occurred to me that this dogwood was not a single tree; it was two. Twenty plus years ago two dogwoods—one with white blossoms and one with pink—were planted only inches apart. As these two trees grew, their trunks fused into one, and their branches intertwined with the appearance of being just one tree. Only in the spring, when the vivid blossoms emerge, the tree reveals its uniqueness.

“And the two shall become one flesh.” What a beautiful picture this tree is of the mystery of the union created by God between a husband and wife. Two individuals grow together in such a way that their lives fuse together, and their gifts and
talents intertwine to create a glorious and unique bouquet for the world to see.

As romantic as this picture is, though, I will be the first to admit that marriage is not always a bed of roses, or dogwood blossoms for that matter. It is true that God has wired men and women differently so as to complement each other, but the world, the flesh, and the devil seek to pervert these differences in order to disrupt unity and to taint intimacy.

In view of this, how do we as men in our God-given roles promote and encourage intimacy in our marriages? The only answer is through the gospel of grace. As children of the kingdom, God loves us unconditionally. He has entered into an everlasting covenant with us—a relationship not based on our works but based on his unchanging love. And since the marriage covenant is designed to reflect the heavenly covenant, the grace that holds us to God (i.e., “cling” as in Genesis 2:24) is the same grace that holds us to each other.

While the covenant is all of grace, we would be wise to study and better understand the uniqueness of masculinity and femininity as expressed in marriage. This is what I seek to do through this journal and study guide.

As a husband, I know it is my responsibility to pray for my wife. Often, though, I do not know the words to use, and I end up feeling that my prayers for her could be more effective. From marriage counseling and pastoral experience, I have met many men who share the same concern. The average Christian man does not know how to pray for his wife. Unfortunately, when we do not know how to pray, we end up not praying at all.
In this process of discovery, I have also found that many Christian women, who are honest enough to admit it, are not enthusiastic about Proverbs 31 because they think that they will never be able to measure up to its seemingly larger-than-life standards. This passage on the “excellent wife” can actually leave them feeling inadequate as wives and mothers. To make matters worse, churches can easily misinterpret this beautiful passage, stripping it of its intended grace, and use it to lay greater guilt on women who are just trying to make it through another day.

It was these thoughts that led me to study this mysterious passage and apply it to husbands for prayer. After an exegetical study of Proverbs 31, which, I might add, was written by a woman, I created this prayer calendar to aid in my prayers for my wife. Having prayed through these requests over the course of several years, I have seen the Lord bless both my wife and my marriage. With this book now in your hands, my prayer is that you and your wife might also experience the Lord’s blessing in your marriage. May the Lord give you grace and understanding of his gospel in such a way that your life and marriage stand as a monument to Christ and his glorious church.
This book is comprised of two parts. The first is an interactive prayer journal with thirty-one entries to correspond with the number of days in the month. It is a guide to help you understand and pray for your wife better (or your wife-to-be if you are single). With each day’s entry, you will see three things:

1. *Translation*: I have translated each verse at the top of the entry from its original Hebrew into a more literal reading, one that helps to bring out some nuances of the words and phrases.

2. *Explanation*: I have provided a further explanation pointing out significant details about the text and how they point to Christ and the covenant.

3. *Supplication*: Borrowing from the themes in the translation and explanation, I have supplied some suggestions for prayer. As you pray through these items, though, please do not feel limited to my suggestions. Use the translation and explanation as a starting point for your own prayers. This is where the journal becomes interactive. You will see spaces where you can write in your own thoughts and prayers.

The second part of this book is a *Study Guide* designed to
How to Use This Book

help pastors and leaders in their teachings on marriage. It can be used in men’s Bible studies, men’s retreats, premarital counseling, or discipleship meetings. Feel free to be creative in your implementation of it.

As you read and pray through this devotional, I would like to encourage you to keep a couple of things in mind. First, Proverbs 31:10-31 was originally written as an acrostic poem. This means that the first letter of each verse corresponds to the Hebrew alphabet. This is significant because as an acrostic poem, it was easier to memorize, suggesting that the author wanted these important truths to be embraced.

Second, not only does this passage serve as instructional literature about women, but it also gives great insight into ecclesiology, the study of the church. God created marriage between a man and woman to be a physical picture of the spiritual union between Christ and his bride, the church. As you work through the deep truths of redeemed femininity, my prayer is that you will not only appreciate how your wife is constructed, but that you might also acquire greater insight into the role and mission of the church.

May these deep truths assist your prayers, and may your wife and you be encouraged by God’s grace as you grow in intimacy with the Lord and with each other. As you find yourselves embraced by grace, may your marriage become a beautiful reflection of the gospel for the world to see.
He who does not believe in God will not believe in God’s people either. But he who has come to believe in God’s people will have his eyes opened to the glory of God, even if he was unable to see it before. Only the masses of simple, humble people and their growing spiritual power will be able to convert the atheists. . . . And what good is the Word of Christ without an example? A nation is lost without the Word of God, for every human soul thirsts for the good and the beautiful.

Fyodor Dostoevsky,

*The Brothers Karamazov*
PROVERBS 31:10-31  
(ESV)

10 An excellent wife who can find?  
She is far more precious than jewels.  
11 The heart of her husband trusts in her,  
and he will have no lack of gain.  
12 She does him good, and not harm,  
all the days of her life.  
13 She seeks wool and flax,  
and works with willing hands.  
14 She is like the ships of the merchant;  
she brings her food from afar.  
15 She rises while it is yet night  
and provides food for her household  
and portions for her maidens.  
16 She considers a field and buys it;  
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.  
17 She dresses herself with strength  
and makes her arms strong.  
18 She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.  
Her lamp does not go out at night.  
19 She puts her hands to the distaff,  
and her hands hold the spindle.  
20 She opens her hand to the poor  
and reaches out her hands to the needy.
She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet.

She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.

She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant.

Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

“Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.”

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.
DAY 1: SECURITY

Proverbs 31:10a

An excellent wife . . .

Explanation

The original author of Proverbs 31 chooses an interesting adjective to introduce us to the woman of excellence. Instead of graceful or careful, which we might expect, she uses a strong word more closely related to battle imagery than to femininity. Some of the meanings attached to the word excellent are “valiant,” “mighty,” “fearless,” “strong,” and “morally worthy.”¹

In my experience as a pastor I have found that one of the universal characteristics of women is their desire for security. Simply put, a woman’s biggest nightmare is to feel insecure and abandoned. Look at the story of Cinderella, or consider the books and movies women love, and you’ll see that in every woman is a girl waiting to be rescued and protected by her man. The bottom line is, women want to feel safe. But from where should true security come?

Ultimate security comes from God and is provided by the gospel. Christ, our Head, fought to rescue us from death, and he promises his presence for eternity.² In addition to looking to Christ for ultimate rescue and security, women look to their
Day One: Security

husbands. As husbands, we are the heads of our wives, and it is our calling to provide security for them in the same way that Christ provides for his bride. We do this by creating an atmosphere where our wives (and children) can feel safe and secure. When done according to God’s design, our marriages become things of beauty that point others to the glorious gospel.

As God demonstrates his love for us by guarding and defending us, and as we demonstrate the same love for our wives, an atmosphere of safety is created, an arena where a woman can come to life. Within a safe environment she can more easily shed her fears and insecurities and thus be freed to express the image and glory of God in her femininity.

A man is made to display strength, and a woman is made to respond to it. Husbands display their strength when they tenderly direct it toward their wives and fiercely direct it toward anything or anyone that would harm them. Such strength is redemptive and life-giving, and it provides the security a wife needs to be strong.

Suggested Prayer

1. Lord, set my wife free as a redeemed daughter, and restore in her your image so that she might become a strong and mighty woman.
2. Enable my wife to trust in you that you might deliver her from fears and insecurities that haunt her.
3. Enable me to be a husband who provides security to my family just as you provide security for your people. Help me to point my family to you through my words and actions.
DAY ONE: SECURITY

JOURNAL
Are there specific insecurities with which your wife struggles and from which she desires freedom? Write your prayer for her in the space below.

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

ANSWERS TO PRAYER
How has the Lord answered your prayers as you pray for your wife in this area? When was the last time you admired your wife’s fortitude? Include it here.

Date: _______ Answer: _______________________________________

___________________________________________________________

Date: _______ Answer: _______________________________________

___________________________________________________________

Date: _______ Answer: _______________________________________

___________________________________________________________

Date: _______ Answer: _______________________________________

___________________________________________________________

25
DAY 2:
TREASURE
Proverbs 31:10b

... who can find?
Her value is far above jewels.

Explanation
After introducing us to a mighty and fearless woman (Day 1), the author asks, “Who can find such a woman?” The question alone implies that this type of person is rare. In fact, if found, her value far exceeds that of precious jewels such as diamonds. The Hebrew word for “jewels” here is also the word for “pearls.”

It is fascinating that the excellent woman is compared to a priceless gem that has been cut and polished to perfection. Both diamonds and pearls undergo a process through which they are made beautiful. Diamonds are cut and polished with great precision and care by a master artist. Pearls are created as a result of a piece of sand that has been lodged inside an oyster. This marine mollusk secretes a substance that calcifies around the sand, creating a pearl. Zoologists tell us that this process is as painful for the oyster as it is for a woman to give birth. So a carbon rock becomes a priceless diamond, and a common grain of sand becomes a pearl of great price. Also in both cases, an artist transforms the stones into beautiful and valuable jewels.
DAY 2: TREASURE

This process is very much like the transformation of a sinner to a saint, since the process of salvation is performed by the Master Artist and requires his immediate care and attention. Women do not work harder to transform themselves into persons of excellence. Rather they submit to God’s dealings as he works upon them through time, experience, and often through pain to make them beautiful testimonies of God’s artistry. God admonishes us husbands to both find and behold the emerging beauty within our wives. A diamond in the rough is still a diamond, and a pearl hidden in a rough and ordinary oyster shell is still a pearl. A woman in the process of sanctification is appreciating into a valuable, “hard to find” woman—a treasure worth so much more than the rarest of diamonds. Begin to view her as such, and you’ll discover that you’ll value her more and more.

SUGGESTED PRAYER

1. Lord, help me see that my wife’s value is greater than any earthly thing.
2. Enable me to treat her as the “rare find” that she is.
3. Use me to encourage her in your process of sanctification that you are directing.

JOURNAL

Write some of your own prayers in the space below.
Answers to Prayer

How has the Lord answered your prayers as you pray for your wife in this area? Relate instances where you have seen your wife grow in grace through painful times.

Date: ______ Answer: ______________________________________

___________________________________________________________

Date: ______ Answer: ______________________________________

___________________________________________________________

Date: ______ Answer: ______________________________________

___________________________________________________________

Date: ______ Answer: ______________________________________

___________________________________________________________
NOTES

3. 1 Corinthians 11:3.
4. Ephesians 5:25.
5. Throughout the Old Testament, this Hebrew word for “trust” is always presented in the negative when used in the context of trusting in human relationships, communicating that trust in man (or nations) is a false security. The same word, however, is always used in the positive when referring to trusting in God as the only sure foundation. Proverbs 31:11 is the only exception, making this type of trust dangerous but also commendable. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1 (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1980), p. 102.
8. A woman who truly submits to her husband actively supports him in his mission and calling. The very construction of the word submission speaks of support: *sub* means under, and *mission* speaks of purpose and vision. One who is sub-missive is one who has come under the mission to give support.
12. The average woman abhors the old adage: “It’s not personal; it’s business.” This phrase strikes at the very core of most women, who have a lot to teach us men about the value of a relationship, especially as it applies in business.
13. This word in 31:16 (*considers or devises*) is “used mainly of the Lord carrying out his purposes in judgment against the wicked nations or of wicked men who devise schemes against God and the righteous. . . . The book of Proverbs contains the broadest range of meaning relative to this term. There is a sharp division between the negative concept of ‘men who devise evil’ and the positive notion of ‘discretion.’ . . . The verb [form] occurs only twice, in Proverbs, once with the normal meaning of ‘plot’ (Prov 30:32), and once in the sense of ‘consider’ (31:16). This latter meaning is found in the epilogue of the book, a poem honoring the woman who exemplifies wisdom at its best.