

A Woman's Secret to a Balanced Life

by Lysa Terkeurst and Sharon Jaynes

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Seven Cascades

Sharon

To celebrate our twentieth wedding anniversary, my husband and I traveled to Maui, where we decided to explore the tropical beauty along a road called the Hana Highway. The brochures promised black sandy beaches, a view of Hawaii's largest volcano wreathed in clouds, African tulip trees with orange-red blossoms, exotic plants tucked among bamboo forests, and vistas of raucous waves crashing against rocky cliffs.

Instead of being carted up the mountain in a cushy, airconditioned tour bus, we decided to rent a car and travel at our own pace. After all, the tour guide from the hotel lobby informed us that it would take three to four hours to travel fifty-two miles to the road's end. Being city dwellers who move at a fairly rapid pace, we surmised that the laidback Hawaiian was simply planning to take his time pattering up the

mountainside. We were sure we could make the trip in half the time.

Mr. Tour Guide warned us, “The road is very winding and difficult to maneuver.”

“It’s just a sales ploy,” I whispered to Steve. “We don’t need a guide. Besides, if he can drive that big bus up the road, surely we can manage this little Buick.”

Wiser words were never spoken! I should have had second thoughts as I passed by a T-shirt in the gift shop that read, “I survived the road to Hana.”

The fifty-two-mile stretch of highway was anything but a stretch. It was as if a two-year-old had held a fat crayon in his chubby hand and scribble-scrabbled circles on a piece of paper. Then a surveyor, mistaking the twists and turns for a map, designed the road accordingly. A writer noted that calling it a highway was like calling a Volkswagen a limousine. Yes, the road offered spectacular views, but I missed many of them because my eyes were closed due to motion sickness.

Well, three and one-half nerve-wracking hours, 54 bridges (many of which were one lane), and 617 hairpin turns later, we made it to the mountain’s crest and the end of the Hana Highway. Was it worth the twists and turns, cliff-hanging maneuvers, and near head-on collisions?

The sight I beheld when we reached the top will be etched forever in my mind. A series of seven interconnected pools spilled into one another down the mountain and formed the spectacular Wiamoku Falls. The rains from heaven pour into the first pool at the mountain peak. When it’s filled, it spills into a majestic waterfall that ends in the second pool several yards down the mountain. The second pool overflows to a third pool, then a fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh.

Eventually, the seven waterfalls flow into the Pacific Ocean.

Those seven cascades are much like our relationship with God. When we come to Christ, God pours His blessings into us, filling us with His love, power, and grace. The more time we spend with Him, the more we become full of His love, which spills over to those around us.

As a matter of fact, Proverbs 31 provides us with seven waterfalls and pools. Lysa and I discovered that insight into Scripture as we began to work with an incredible organization called Proverbs 31 Ministries. Our desire is to help women build godly homes. We believe that the place to start is by touching a woman's heart for Christ, which in turn touches the entire family. We've identified seven qualities (or waterfalls, if you will) in the wife of noble character mentioned in Proverbs 31. With those qualities in mind, we established the Seven Principles of the Proverbs 31 Woman. The order of the principles has great significance, as we strive to keep our priorities in perspective. In our fastpaced, upside-down society, boundaries are blurred, roles are reversed, and priorities perplex us. These principles help to bring our lives into focus and to give us direction.

Now, as we share the Seven Principles of the Proverbs 31 Woman, I want you to envision yourself taking in the breathtaking plummet of the waterfalls from pool to pool.

The Proverbs 31 woman:

- Reveres Jesus Christ as Lord of her life and pursues an ongoing, personal relationship with Him.
- Loves, honors, and respects her husband as the leader of the home.
- Nurtures her children and believes that motherhood is a high calling with the responsibility of shaping and molding the children who will one day define who we are as a community and a nation.
- Is a disciplined and industrious keeper of the home who creates a warm and loving environment for her family and friends.

- Contributes to the financial well-being of her household by being a faithful steward of the time and money God has entrusted to her.
- Speaks with wisdom and faithful instruction as she mentors and supports other women and develops godly friendships.
- Shares the love of Christ by extending her hands to help with the needs of the community.

As women, our lives must be filled, first and foremost, with Jesus Christ. Then and only then can Christ's love spill over first to our husbands, second to our children, then to our homes, our friends, our community, and the world.

On some days, the seven falls are more spectacular than on others. During heavy rains and frequent storms, God fills the pools to bursting, and water rushes grandly from one step to the next. The results are spectacular. However, no one likes being caught in a downpour.

How like our Christian walk. No one enjoys the storms of life. But it seems that during those times God fills us to overflowing, and onlookers are inspired and refreshed by the splashes of His grace displayed in our lives.

But sometimes dry periods come, when the falls are reduced to a mere trickle and appear inconsequential and insignificant. We feel we aren't much to look at, and those watching aren't "oohing" and "aahing." That's when we need to pray that He will shower us with His presence and fill us anew.

The Proverbs 31 woman has represented an ideal for women throughout the ages. While she intimidates some, all would agree she is a role model worth emulating.

Scripture describes her as smart, skillful, thrifty, and strong. She's a good cook, a savvy money manager, a contributor to the community, an

entrepreneur, a seamstress, a blessed mother, a faithful friend, a loyal wife, and a devotee of God. As Proverbs 31:10 states, “An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.” The *New International Version* calls her “a wife of noble character.”

But I personally like the *Amplified* version that describes her as “a capable, intelligent, and virtuous woman.” The Hebrew word that’s translated “excellent” or “virtuous” can also mean “wealthy, prosperous, valiant, boldly courageous, powerful, mighty warrior.”

One word I can’t find listed in Proverbs 31 is the word “perfect”—what a relief. Yes, the Proverbs 31 woman is a pretty incredible ideal. She’s an awesome standard of excellence. But Scripture never says she was perfect. She probably had days when she yelled at her kids for misbehaving. She probably had days when her husband kept quiet and didn’t praise her at the city gates. And occasionally, I think she had days when she worked with her hands but not in delight.

Why do I think that? Because even though she was excellent and virtuous, she was a woman who needed a Savior. And that takes us right back to the top of the waterfall.

That’s where our journey in this book begins, too. Lysa and I want to share with you our ongoing efforts to become Proverbs 31 women. We’ll talk about our victories and failures, uncover some biblical treasures, and offer practical suggestions for becoming a woman who is filled with Christ, a woman who “spills over” for others.

So put on your hiking shoes and join Lysa and me as we explore the joys of becoming a Proverbs 31 woman.