

Praise Her

– *for Kristina Woods Brown on the occasion of her ordination,
inspired by Proverbs 31:10-31, an abecedarian poem in the Hebrew Bible*

Above rubies, he wrote long ago. We celebrate this woman— wife, mother, daughter, best friend, sister to us all—for her worth is far above rubies. True enough, and yet comparing a woman to jewels is dated to some. Writing now, would he mention Wall Street dividends, preferred interest rates, or that lasting standard, gold? Or is there something else to compare her to, a more fitting metaphor for how she enriches our lives?

Fine chocolate comes to mind, for she has soothed me in troubled times better than Ghirardelli or Godiva ever could. A beautiful house comes to mind, for in her home I am comfortable as if I were in my own. My own never looks so good. Industrious, organized, she could run the country, I'm convinced, yet she never judges my cluttered kitchen counter—or other faults. Instead, she stirs me to expand my knowledge, my worldview, even the very food I eat. She's better than a trip abroad.

Like an heirloom quilt, she's a study in colorful character, consistent pattern, comfort. Many benefit from her work of long days and sometimes late nights, but never have I seen her temperamental. Okay, rarely – she is a real person, after all. Only a saint would do better. Like a white oak basket from her native South, her prayers, passions and priorities interweave. Form and function. Strength and simple beauty.

Quick to help, she still takes her time to listen and learn. She offers everyone respect and earns it in return. She makes a difference—in my life and yours, in the lives of strangers, in the lives of her church and community. She is caring counselor, bold advocate, talented teacher, a visionary of action. She is a hug, a laugh, a tear. What's hers is mine, unselfishly loaned—a good book, new music, once even a toaster oven. She's a leisurely visit, a thoughtful gift, a telling bumper sticker. She is one I can call in the middle of the night.

Who can find a virtuous woman? Proverbs asks. We who know her have. X chromosomes mark her gender, but character marks her person, purity her spirit. Years will reward her and age will become her, because she is indeed a fine woman, zealous for life and love and the One she follows. We are blessed to walk with her on the way.

– *Kory Wells
August 21, 2011*