

"Ordinary Advice for Extraordinary Times" 6. The (impossibly) perfect wife (Proverbs 31)

Proverbs 31:1 The sayings of King Lemuel—an inspired utterance his mother taught him.
2 Listen, my son! Listen, son of my womb! Listen, my son, the answer to my prayers!

3 Do not spend your strength on women,
your vigor on those who ruin kings.
4 It is not for kings, Lemuel—
it is not for kings to drink wine,
not for rulers to crave beer,
5 lest they drink and forget what has been decreed,
and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.
6 Let beer be for those who are perishing,
wine for those who are in anguish!
7 Let them drink and forget their poverty
and remember their misery no more.

8 Speak up for those who cannot speak for
themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.
9 Speak up and judge fairly;
defend the rights of the poor and needy.

*10 A wife of noble character who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies.*

11 Her husband has full confidence in her
and lacks nothing of value.

12 She brings him good, not harm,
all the days of her life.

13 She selects wool and flax
and works with eager hands.

14 She is like the merchant ships,
bringing her food from afar.

15 She gets up while it is still night;
she provides food for her family
and portions for her female servants.

16 She considers a field and buys it;
out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

17 She sets about her work vigorously;
her arms are strong for her tasks.

18 She sees that her trading is profitable,
and her lamp does not go out at night.

19 In her hand she holds the distaff
and grasps the spindle with her fingers.

20 She opens her arms to the poor
and extends her hands to the needy.

21 When it snows, she has no fear for her household;
for all of them are clothed in scarlet.

22 She makes coverings for her bed;
she is clothed in fine linen and purple.

23 Her husband is respected at the city gate,
where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.

24 She makes linen garments and sells them,
and supplies the merchants with sashes.

25 She is clothed with strength and dignity;
she can laugh at the days to come.

26 She speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

27 She watches over the affairs of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.

28 Her children arise and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:

29 "Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all."

*30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*

31 Honor her for all that her hands have done,
and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

The Structure of the Book of Proverbs		
Chapters	Section	Talk Topics
1:1-7	Introduction	1. Do you want to be wise?
1:8-9:18	Instruction	2. Choose wisdom not folly
10:1-31:9	Sayings	3. Ethics by soundbites
		4. The ant and the sluggard
		5. What can we learn from worldly wisdom?
31:10-31	Conclusion	6. The (impossibly) perfect wife

1. A wise mother (vv1-2)

"Lemuel was not a king in Israel or Judea, so this "foreign" material has been incorporated into this wisdom book because its truths need hearing" (Wilson, *Proverbs*, p.314)

2. A wise king (vv3-9)

i. what he should NOT do (vv3-7)

ii. what he should do (vv8-9)

3. A wise wife (vv10-31)

"acrostic poem" = the A-Z

i.

ii.

iii.

1 Ki 10:21 All King Solomon's goblets were gold, and all the household articles in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Nothing was made of silver, because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's days.

Q. So who IS this woman in Ch 31?

i. "Lady Wisdom" personified (cf Chs 1-9)

Prov 3:13 **Blessed are those who find wisdom**, those who gain understanding, 14 for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. 15 She is **more precious than rubies**; nothing you desire can compare with her.

ii. a metaphor for Jesus (!)

iii. an example of someone who has succeeded in this quest to find wisdom

- not "**how to be a woman**" but "**how to be wise**"
- not "**who do I date**" but "**who I should emulate**"
- not "**how do I find her?**" but "**how do I become like her?**"

Prov 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Col 1:29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

<p>For discussion/reflection: what you have YOU learned from Proverbs, and what's your response?</p>
