

## Proverbs Chapter 31 - John Karmelich

1. We made it to the final chapter of the Book of Proverbs. Like the previous chapter, this final chapter is unique from the rest of the book, yet at the same time is still on the topic of wisdom.
  - a) The author is unknown, written under the name of "King Lemuel". There is no King Lemuel in Jewish history, nor in the history of any of the nations around Israel.
  - b) Jewish tradition is that Lemuel is a nickname for Solomon, given by his mother. We'll discuss this more when we get to Verse 1.
  - c) The first nine verses, after the introduction is instructions on how a king should act.
  - d) At Verse 10, the topic changes to the subject of how a woman is to be pleasing to God. It is "assumed" this whole chapter, including this "woman section" is written by Lemuel's mother through King Lemuel.
2. Chapter 31 is known as the "woman's chapter", which is misleading. This is because verse 10 through the end of the chapter is a description on how to be a good wife and mom.
  - a) Yes, much of this chapter is written about how a great wife should act. Because the verses are written to this King, a lot of these verses are also about a man should treat his wife.
    - i) One thing my wife noticed about this chapter is that there is no mention about the issue of prayer. Either it goes without saying, or it was an overlooked issue.
  - b) For Orthodox Jewish families, part of the Sabbath day ritual is for a husband to read this section of scripture to his wife. The idea is not for the husband to tell his wife how you should act as I'm already perfect. The idea is for the husband to tell his wife, here are the goals of the way you should act, so we can glorify God together.
  - c) There is also something interesting that doesn't come out in the English translations. The godly wife section begins in Verse 10 and runs to Verse 31. Each verse begins with a different letter of the Hebrew Alphabet. The first letter of each verse is in Hebrew alphabetical order. For example, the first word in Verse 10, in Hebrew, begins with the letter "a". The first letter of the first word of Verse 11 begins with a "b". There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and this pattern runs until Verse 31. Why is it done this way? To help Jewish readers remember the verses and their order!
3. Is the bible saying all women should stay at home and raise children? No, but it is the most common thing women did, so it is important to discuss this topic.
  - a) I never condemn couples where wives work because the couple can't afford a "basic" lifestyle. I also understand it is necessary if she has no husband to support her.
    - i) I am careful about the word "basic". If the wife is working and trying to raise kids at the same time, the kids are going to suffer. Families where the wife can stay home statistically do better than those where both parents work. If it is a matter of trying to make ends meet, and both spouses need to work, it is understandable.
    - ii) If one is raising children and the wife is also working in order to have a second home or some similar type of luxury, just remember that one is hurting their children far more than you are helping them by working that much.
4. Verse 1: The sayings of King Lemuel--an oracle his mother taught him:
  - a) As I stated in the introduction, we have no idea who King Lemuel is. Jewish tradition is that this is Solomon and that would "make sense" given the book. Most likely Lemuel is a nickname given to Solomon by his mother. It is very common for mom's to have a nickname for their children that nobody else uses. Remember that Solomon's mother is Bathsheba, the woman who had an affair with David and then they got married.
    - i) The word "Lemuel" is similar to the Hebrew word "Immanuel", which means "God is with us". Commentator's suspect Lemuel is Bathsheba's pet name for Solomon.
  - b) The point is this chapter is based on the teachings of the mother of King Lemuel, which the king then wrote down and it became part of this book!

5. Verse 2: "O my son, O son of my womb, O son of my vows,"
  - a) Here in Verse 2, we have more "titles" of the son given by the mom. What we have hear is the mother, speaking to the son and calling "out" to him.
  - b) The first phrase is "O my son". The second phrase is "son of my womb". Those are just ways of saying, her love of her son. The third title is the interesting one that says, "Son of my vows". If this was written by Solomon's mother, what vow is she talking about?
  - c) Remember that the first baby produced by David and Bathsheba (Solomon's mother) died shortly after it was born. (2nd Samuel 12:14-19). One wonders of Bathsheba then "prayed for a new son" after that incident. It doesn't prove this is written by Bathsheba, but it fits the story line of that incident.
6. Verse 3: do not spend your strength on women, your vigor on those who ruin kings.
  - a) Again, Jewish tradition is that this section was written by Solomon's mother Bathsheba. That tradition states that this text was written when Solomon started going after foreign women and these women started compromising Solomon's worship of God. We don't know for sure that is true, but it would fit well with the story line. (See 1st Kings 11:1).
  - b) The point is the mother of the king is lecturing her son to "Not spend your strength on women, your vigor on those who ruin kings".
    - i) A common theme through all of proverbs is for a man to stick close to his wife and not fool around on that commitment. The point is that if Solomon is the king, he is not to spend a lot of time chasing after women but focus on his duty as the king.
  - c) As much as Solomon's father David was a "man of God", one key mistake David made is that he had many wives and concubines. Solomon picked up on his father's style to have multiple wives and Solomon took far more wives and concubines than David ever imagined. Bathsheba's advice was essentially, "Learn from your father's mistakes and don't multiply wives. Remember that Bathsheba herself was not the first wife of David and she may be trying to teach her son not to repeat David's mistakes.
    - i) Way back before Israel ever had a king, the book of Deuteronomy stated that Israelite kings shall not multiply wives for themselves (Deut. 17:17). The point is neither David nor Solomon took that requirement to heart.
  - d) OK, you and I will probably never be a king one day. How do we apply this verse? The application to married men is to focus on their wives and not other women. Once we make a marriage commitment to our wives, the bible says we are to stick to it. If one is a divorced and now a Christian, one is forgiven of all sins, past, present and future and there is no obligation to go back to an old relationship.
    - i) For single men, most of this chapter is giving advice on how to find a wife that is pleasing to God. Therefore, one can read this chapter as a mini-lecture on how to find a godly wife.
    - ii) The application for Christian men is if we are married, we should not be wasting our time chasing after "strange women" who can bring us to ruin.
7. Verse 4: "It is not for kings, O Lemuel-- not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer,<sup>5</sup> lest they drink and forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.
  - a) The first bit of advice given by Lemuel's mother was about not wasting one's life chasing after women. It can ruin one's life (Verse 3). The idea of Verse 3 was not about finding the right woman to marry, but about the mistake of spending one's adult life primarily concerned with the "next sexual conquest" in life.
  - b) Now in Verses 4-5 we move on the second issue: It is not for kings to drink wine. The idea is not limited to beer and wine, but strong drink.
    - i) Some commentaries say that for a king to avoid alcohol completely was unheard of at that time. They argue that these verses are warning against kings getting drunk so they forget what the law decrees and not help the oppressed.

- ii) Others argue that when one has a position of power, one has to make that sacrifice completely in order to make good decisions.
    - iii) My view is based on the personality of the king. Some people can be offered a glass of wine at dinner, and not even finish the one glass they are given. Others have a weakness for alcohol and the danger of having it around causes them to get drunk and make bad decisions.
  - c) The main point of these verses is that it is teaching it is bad for those in power to be led by alcohol and let it affect their decisions. If one is in a position of power, be it government or even a church leader, one needs to drink very sparingly and avoid the "appearance". The problem is a church leader can be seen leaving a grocery store with a bottle of wine and somebody in the congregation sees it and starts spreading rumors. The price one pays for leadership is one has to keep the appearance of being a good leader at all times.
8. Verse 6: Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish; <sup>7</sup> let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more.
- a) A question to be asked at this point by a king is, "If alcohol is so bad, why does it exist in the first place? Is it ever right for anyone to get drunk?" Verses 6-7 answer that question.
  - b) The response by Lemuel's mother is that if someone is in horrible physical pain, it is ok as a sedative. In today's world, we often given morphine to cancer victims who are near the end of their life, to help them deal with the pain. That is the idea of the verse.
    - i) The other related idea is that if a person who is in poverty and misery, it is ok for them to drink to forget their pain. I see this sentence as applying to those who are spiritually poor and don't want to turn to God. In other words, if a person wants to be "spiritually poor and miserable" and not turn to God, let them drink. Yes, I'd rather see them turn to God and change their lives, but if they want to live in that misery, then let them have strong drink.
  - c) With that said, the main idea of these verses is about those who are not only poor, but in a lot of physical pain and alcohol is acceptable to help them deal with the pain.
9. Verse 8: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. <sup>9</sup> Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."
- a) Here are the final two verses of this section. The last bit of advice given by Lemuel's mother is about the importance of judging fairly and defending the poor and needy.
  - b) One has to remember that an Israelite king is also "chief justice" of the land as well. Part of the role of a king was to be the final judge in court cases.
  - c) Remember that the reason Lemuel's mother told her son not to drink (and probably not to spend his life chasing women) is so that son can be a king that is pleasing to God. A key way to be pleasing to God is to rule "fairly and justly". A good way to tell if a king is pleasing God is how that king or judge treats those who cannot adequately defend themselves: In other words, is that leader giving justice to the poor and needy!
    - i) If you recall, we have had a number of proverbs on this topic. Some of those proverbs warn about the type of judge that takes bribes and pervert justice.
  - d) Putting the first nine verses together, the idea is for a leader to not focus on things that can draw that leader away from doing his or her job: That include wasting a lot of time chasing members of the opposite sex and getting drunk. As a leader, one must constantly protect the rights of the poor and needy, and one cannot do that if one is either getting drunk or busy chasing other women around.
  - e) So how do these verses apply to you and I? For starters, God calls on us to pray for our government elected leaders. Pray for them to lead "correctly" and not let justice be ruined by bad behavior such as drinking or "fooling around".
    - i) The point is when a leader does one of those bad things, it not only hurts them personally, but it affects their ability to be a leader over others.

- ii) If one is in a position of authority, be it a local government official or something else, one has to take these verses to heart. Even if there is nothing on the "books" in your office about drinking or "carousing", you and I are still accountable to God as He cares about our behavior!
    - iii) The advice is not just for kings and "presidents", it is for judges, city council members and leaders of our local church. Even if others in your position of guilty of this, remember who we are accountable to!
  - f) Taking this verse to a local level, if one is a leader (elder) or a pastor of a church, I would avoid alcohol as one is always "on call".
    - i) Paul made a few interesting comments on this topic for elders. Paul said elders of a church must be "sober minded" and "not given to wine". I don't think that means one is to completely avoid wine completely unless it is a problem. The idea is about being "sober" at all times as one is always on duty. When in doubt, avoid it. The idea of "given to wine" is about being given over to wine in that drinking has a significant affect on one's life.
    - ii) Paul also told Timothy on one occasion, "Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses." Timothy battled stomach issues and Paul said it was ok to use a little wine to help deal with it. The point was Paul was not against the complete banishment of alcohol, but only to use it in the right circumstances. (1st Timothy 5:23).
  - g) OK, enough of all of that. Let's move on to the topic of the "Godly woman".
    - i) From Verses 10 to the end of the chapter is on the issue of how to be a woman pleasing to God. Is this section a continuation of the sermon by "Lemuel's" mother or just Solomon talking? We can't tell. The point is not who is the author here, but to study how a women is to act and how a husband is to treat her.
10. Verse 10: A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.
- a) Verse 10 is written more to the man than to the women. The point is the "type" of woman a man should look for in life and what is her value.
  - b) Earlier in this chapter, Lemuel's mother warns her son not to waste his life chasing after women! One has to read that verse in context of this chapter. That verse is not about searching to find the right wife! That earlier verse was about once one is married, to no longer waste one's time chasing after strange women.
  - c) Proverbs is full of commentary about "adulterous" women who go from one man to another. The opposite of that adulterous woman is the godly wife as the one being described in these final 21 verses of Proverbs.
  - d) My advice to my daughters is for them to do their best to find a godly man. Whoever my daughter's pick, as long as he is such a man, I will support their decision to marry or not marry him all the way until she says "I do". Once they make that commitment, I expect her to stick to it. So unless the husband cheats on them or beats them, I expect them to stick it out. In the mean time, I want them to be the type of "noble character" as described in this section.
  - e) It's important to state at this point that the bible is not expecting "Godly women" to be perfect all the time. The idea of this section of the text is to set a standard to live up to. I'm also convinced different verses in this section apply to different stages in the life of a married woman. This section is more about "life-long" goals and accomplishments than it is a day to day set of actions.
  - f) Back to Verse 10: This verse is written for the man. Let me address the married man first:
    - i) Pray for one's wife daily to be the type of woman God wants her to be. Remember it is God's job to "work on" one's wife, not the husbands. For married men, one should live a life pleasing to God and pleasing to one's wife in all that one does and let God work on making one's wife pleasing to the husband.

- ii) There are marriage issues that require talking and compromising. The point for the couple to personally discuss those issues in a way so the couple does not put each other down.
  - g) Let me address the single man who is not married. There is no such thing as the perfect woman. Single men spend far too much time looking in the wrong places trying to find the right woman. If single men would learn to spend a bit of their time preparing themselves for the right wife, God will help put her in the right place at the right time. To "prepare oneself" is to study God's word and learn how to be a good husband.
    - i) The other bit of key advice for single men is to focus on "personality traits" more than a woman's looks or interests. A person's looks and interests change over a lifetime. One's "core personality traits" rarely changes.
    - ii) The key is to find a woman who one wants to be with the rest of one's life regardless of their looks! A related point is you can't expect a woman to fulfill all of one's needs in life. Friendship with other men is important as well. I do argue that married men should not have close friendships with other women.
    - iii) As a Christian, the bible teaches us not to be equally yoked with non-believers. (2nd Corinthians 6:14). Some singles try "evangelical dating" hoping their boyfriend or girlfriend will change once they date. It doesn't work. There are many unhappy couples out there as one person thought the other would change after they got married.
    - iv) Obviously, this is a complicated topic and one can go on from here. I just wanted to give the "basics" of picking a wife or husband pleasing to God and to one's self!
  - h) Let's get back to the verse. The second sentence says, "She is worth far more than rubies".
    - i) The idea here is a great woman is worth more than any physical wealth. The value of a great wife is worth far more, than say a big pile of gold or "rubies".
    - ii) A wise single man spends time to find the right woman and treasures her more than a commodity like rubies. Treating one's wife as a valued jewel should continue through the marriage. All men, including myself have to remember that.
11. Verse 11: Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.
- a) Notice Verse 11 is indirectly addressed to both the husband and the wife. The verse says the husband "has full confidence in her". That means the husband trusts her to run the household and trusts that she will be a loyal to him. I know that's the case with my wife.
  - b) The second part of this verse says the husband lacks nothing of value. This does not mean that all husbands will be financially rich. It means that the wife will help the husband all the days of her life.
    - i) As I've stated in earlier lessons, the best moments in a marriage is when the husband puts the wife's needs before his and the wife puts his needs before her own. The idea is a healthy marriage is one where each person is constantly trying to lift up their spouse to make them a better person!
  - c) The goal of a good marriage is for both spouses to do "good" for each other. I am in no way claiming to be perfect or even good at doing this. I am stating this is the goal for a healthy marriage when both spouses treat each other well.
    - i) A great classical saying here is, "Happy wife is a happy life". What that means is if a husband works to make his wife happy, he'll have a happy life. One has to think about this carefully. If a spouse only cares about material things to a point of ignoring God, then it is a problem. On the other hand, a husband is not to ignore the material needs of the wife and to treat her well.
  - d) Which leads us back to the verse: This verse is saying a Godly wife is one where the husband can trust her and he lacks nothing of any eternal value. This verse is not about the husband immediately being rich, but if a man has a godly wife and if the man has a healthy relationship with God himself, He lacks nothing of any significant value.

12. Verse 12: She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.
- a) Verse 12 expands on the idea of the previous verse. A godly wife is one who does the husband good all the days of his life. More credit to my wife in this category.
  - b) Does this mean a wife is to be perfect and never argue nor never bring up issues? No.
    - i) It means that through the life of the wife, she generally works to bring "harmony" to the relationship between the two of them and their family.
    - ii) The corollary for men is they are to do good for the wife all the days of their marriage as well.
  - c) Does this mean the wife is to cater to every need of the husband? No, it's not realistic and not what the verse is saying! The verse is teaching that over the course of a marriage, the wife is working to do the husband and her children good in all that she does in her life.
    - i) The application can be as basic as taking care of the home and the children. It can also include financial help as needed. The point is the husband and wife are working together as a team to make their lives better in all that they do.
13. Verse 13: She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.
- a) Beginning in Verse 13, there are verses that are "culturally related". The point is we are not to be overly literal in applying it, but to understand the principals behind the verse.
  - b) For example, here in Verse 13, it says a godly wife selects wool and flax and works with her hands. Does that mean God calls wives to hand make garments for their family? No. The idea is the wife is willing to go to great lengths and trouble in order to provide for her family. In this verse, the wife gets material and is willing to make things with her hands.
    - i) Need some modern examples or comparisons? How about someone who takes a lot of time and trouble to find good bargains for herself and her family!
    - ii) At the same time, such a wife is not "afraid" to work with their hands on projects that are helpful to the family. This could include gardening and sewing. The point is such a person does not consider any job beneath them!
14. Verse 14: She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.
- a) If you know anything about a merchant ship, they travel far distances to deliver goods. The verse is not saying the godly wife has to board ships to collect her food. ☺ The idea is the wife is willing to travel far and wide to get good bargains as well as different kinds of food for her family to try.
  - b) This is one of many verses stating in effect the godly wife is willing to work hard for the sake of her husband and her family. She's not afraid to go to all sorts of time and trouble to get food for her family. More praise to my wife, with this verse in mind.
15. Verse 15: She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls.
- a) The idea of this verse is the godly women is willing to get up before the rest of the family in order to provide food for her family and for her household.
  - b) Notice that the woman in this verse has a servant. This verse is not saying it is a requirement to have a servant, only that the wife is willing to provide for her "staff" if she has one as well as her family. The godly wife is not above the concept of getting up early and taking on food preparation as a hands on project.
  - c) I stated early in this lesson that I don't believe every verse applies to every day of a godly woman's life. Let's face it, if one is dealing with a new born baby in the house, I'm sure the woman is excused from getting up before everyone else, as she's already been up half of the night. Further, most young couples don't have any sort of domestic help. It is usually when one is more successful later in life, that one can have support staff.
  - d) Again, the point is not whether or not we have children or have servants. The point is a godly woman is willing to get up early and start the morning chores even before the rest of the family is up.

16. Verse 16: She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.
- a) Ok, how many of you "godly women" out there have bought a field lately for planting grapes? ☺ Is that something God wants us to do? Again, one has to read this verse in terms of its local culture and then understand the underlying application.
  - b) The point is God wants the godly women to not be afraid of making an effort to do things for the sake of her family. It may involve taking risks and trying new things.
  - c) As I've stated earlier, not every line in this section applies to every day in the life of the godly women. Most newlywed couples don't have the money for any sort of significant investment to benefit themselves or their family. A point of this line is the husband trusts the wife with some or all of the family budget and lets her use the money to buy things that would benefit the family.
  - d) Again, the verse is not saying that we should buy a field that is used for a vineyard. The point is about taking risks for the sake of the family. Think about this woman in this verse: She had to learn things about grape growing and what type of field conditions are right for such a venture. She had to learn about real estate and how to do a transaction.
    - i) The point is the wife got educated on these topics and learns how to do things for the sake of the family. The other underlying point is her husband trusts her to make such decisions and he gives her blessing with some of the family funds.
  - e) It's interesting to think about all the verses in Proverbs warning against getting drunk and here is this proverb with the good-wife buying and planting a vineyard. This verse shows that God does not condemn the process of making wine, but just the act of getting drunk, especially for certain types of leaders and certain situations.
17. Verse 17: She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.
- a) Let me put this verse in "modern English": The husband gives the wife the time to go to the gym and build up her body so she can take on the physical tasks of life. Her arms are strong from all of the physical work she's willing to do!
  - b) This is another proverb saying in effect that the godly wife is not afraid of hard work and her arms (can also be translated mid-section) is built up due to her physical efforts.
  - c) Notice the implication of the role of the husband in this verse: He encourages her to work hard and allows her the time to "prepare" for the work at hand.
  - d) Do verses like this one and the last few mean the godly-wife never takes time to rest? Of course not. The underlying idea is that the godly-women not only lives a life that is pleasing to God in all that she does, but works hard at her job that God called her to do, which is to be a good wife and godly mom to the children.
18. Verse 18: She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.
- a) In the Middle Eastern culture of that time, people did not always deal in "money". Let's say one was a farmer. They might trade the crops for other things the family needed. If one raised sheep, the husband and wife might trade sheep for other needs.
    - i) The point is the wife works hard to see that her trading is profitable. The idea of "profitable" is that she makes decisions in her trading that benefits the family.
  - b) The idea of "her lamp does not go out at night", can mean that she thinks about the next day before calling it a night. The idea is not that the wife has to stay up all night. The idea is that she is always thinking ahead and always planning for another day!
  - c) A godly wife is one who plans for the future. Again, these verses make it sound like one has to be a "superwoman" all the time. That's not the idea. I'm sure this "great wife" made mistakes all the time. I'm sure there are days she is just plain tired and doesn't live up to all of these expectations.
    - i) The underlying idea is the godly woman does take the time to plan for herself what is best for her family. She makes efforts that the rest of the family may not even know she is doing or even appreciate until later.

- ii) These verses are not saying the wife is perfect or that she doesn't take time to rest. It means as a general rule, she is spending a lot of time making efforts to take care of her family.
- 19. Verse 19: In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.
  - a) The "distaff" and the "spindle" are references to an ancient type of sewing. The idea of this verse is the woman is not afraid to take on "simple labor" herself. She is not above doing basic things all by herself.
  - b) You get the idea the woman of this chapter has servants and can have others do jobs she could argue she is "above" doing. Yet, this verse is saying in effect the godly-woman is not above getting her hands dirty and doing the simple jobs in life herself.
- 20. Verse 20: She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.
  - a) One of the themes scattered through the entire book of Proverbs and all through the bible for that matter, is God wants us to care for the needy. It does not mean we give away all that we own and become poor ourselves. On the other hand God hates when we do "nothing" and just keep all of our earnings for ourselves.
  - b) Jesus teaches this principal in the gospels. Jesus said, "The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me." (Matthew 26:11, Mark 14:7 and John 12:8). The main point of that verse is that Jesus is with the disciples and that time together won't be for much longer. Therefore the disciples should take the time to learn from Jesus as there will always be the poor. More "kudos" to my wife, for following this verse.
    - i) Jesus underlying point is not about ignoring the poor. Jesus point is that the poor and desolate will always exist and there would be time after Jesus left to make an effort to do something for them.
  - c) Which leads us back to this verse: The godly-wife makes an effort to do something for the poor. It could be a handout or could be some sort of physical effort to help them. The point is God calls us to not ignore the needs of the poor and do "something" relevant to our level of earnings or our level that we have been blessed to do something. This is a theme taught throughout the bible.
- 21. Verse 21: When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.
  - a) The idea of "snow and no fear for her household" is because all of her family and household are well clothed, they don't have to fear cold weather. In other words, this godly wife provides winter clothing for the family.
  - b) The color "scarlet" is a red-dye and is fairly expensive. The idea is the wife makes sure the winter clothing is good material, well sewn and the family is prepared for winter.
  - c) Notice there is nothing said about whether or not she made the clothing or bought the material. The point is she provides for her family and takes the time to make sure the family has warm clothing for the winter months.
- 22. Verse 22: She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.
  - a) In Verse 22, we continue the discussion of this woman's providing of clothing for the family. Not only does she make clothes for the winter, but she makes coverings for the beds for the family and she is personally clothed in fine linen and purple.
  - b) Whoever this woman is, she has "some means" if she can afford fine linen and purple dyed cloth for herself. Obviously, not every woman reading this can afford fine cloth for themselves and their family. The point is this woman makes the effort to make sure their house is taken care of and everybody's clothing is taken care of.
    - i) In our world, this might be translated as the godly woman takes the time to shop for herself and her family to provide good things for them.
  - c) One can read all of this and think, "I'm not superwoman. I can't do all of this." I don't think God expects us to be supermen and superwomen! The idea is the godly man puts the needs of his family as a priority over personal-pleasure stuff and the godly woman puts the needs of her family as a priority over spending on her personal pleasure.



- i) The point is that the godly wife is not supposed to be perfect, but she does make a tremendous effort to take care of her family and for example, go to great shopping efforts to do what is best for them and her self.
  - ii) For example, notice how this woman still obeys God's will of helping the poor and still takes care of her family. Where does one draw the line as how much to give the poor versus how much to keep for them? The simple answer is to do something. God promises to provide in the future when we give to help others
  - iii) Going back to the "superwoman" question: I think God just wants us to make the effort and then trust Him with the results. The opposite of this "superwoman" is not one who fails to get say, the best clothing, but one who never makes the effort in the first place to take care of the family.
- 23. Verse 23: Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.
  - a) In the Middle East at that time, it was common for the leading men of the city to meet at the city gate in order to deal with the business of the day. It means that men help to judge civil disputes that happen in that town.
  - b) Let's look at this verse another way: The type of woman that makes every effort to be a godly wife and godly mom also ends up "lifting up" her husband through her efforts. It makes the husband a better man. It makes him a respected man in the community. What this verse is implying is the effort taken to be a good wife ends up making the husband a better man. He is respected in the community.
  - c) Show me a wife who makes every effort to run the house well and she respects her husband, and I'll usually show you a godly man who is respected.
- 24. Verse 24: She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.
  - a) This "godly woman" not only makes clothes for her family, but makes enough extra clothes that she can sell them to others.
  - b) Does this mean God calls all women to sew for their families? For some, the answer is yes. For others who have the means and the ability to buy, that is acceptable to. The point is the godly wife is always thinking of how to benefit the family. She makes the effort to go over and above and even does "extra things" that can be sold for the benefit of the family.
  - c) One should not read these verses and think, "God wants me to be superwoman." A woman reading this should think, "God wants me to make a good effort to be a good wife and a good mom." The "how" we do that is based on one's culture and financial status.
  - d) Whoever this woman is in this chapter, we get the impression that she is a woman of some financial means who has servants to help her. The point is if a woman with servants can make great efforts to take care of the family and even help others, so can a woman who doesn't have great financial means.
  - e) God is not expecting a man or woman to do more than what they are physically capable of doing. At the same time, God does want us to walk by faith and be the type of man and women that He wants us to be. He wants us to make the effort based on our means.
- 25. Verse 25: She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.
  - a) The first part says she is clothed with "strength and dignity". Obviously this is not referring to one's actual garment, but one's personality. The idea of strength is that of being physically strong enough to face adversity.
    - i) The idea of "dignity" is that she has done no significant wrong. If one recalls, there were a lot of verses in Proverbs about doing the right thing so that one can go out in public and not have any fear of being arrested. Along those same lines, the godly wife is full of "dignity" for doing the right thing.

- b) The second part says "she can laugh at the days to come". The point is if one sees rough times ahead, such a wife provides her family with enough clothes and possibly food to see us through the rough times. I don't believe the verse means to prepare for say a five-year depression. The idea is more about the winter coming and the wife is not scared of the climate change or temporary financial changes and what it means to the family.
  - c) Now that we are near the end of the chapter, we are starting to see some of the qualities to look for in a wife. Notice the verse does not say to find a wife who is physically beautiful, but to find one who is clothed with "strength and dignity".
    - i) In other words, a great wife is one who has a good reputation before God and people. Again, it is not about being perfect. At the same time, such a woman generally lives her life to be pleasing to God in all that she does. That is an underlying idea behind "strength and dignity".
26. Verse 26: She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
- a) Throughout the book of Proverbs, we have had lots of proverbs on the issue of being wise, getting wisdom and hanging around wise people.
  - b) Here in Verse 26, it is saying such a godly woman speaks with wisdom.
  - c) The idea is such a woman can also pass on her knowledge to others. More cheers for my wife given this verse.
  - d) Notice Paul's advice to older women in the church: "Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. (Titus 2:3-5 NIV).
    - i) It may help to read this a few times. The basic idea is that a godly woman can pass her knowledge on to others.
  - e) I get the impression that Verse 26 is designed for a women who have lived long enough to pass on some of her wisdom to others. One does not have to wait to be old to apply this proverb, but to apply the Godly wisdom one has learned and pass it on to others.
27. Verse 27: She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.
- a) This line is a good summary of how the godly wife and mom is to act. She cares about the affairs of her household, provides for them and is not "idle".
  - b) The idea of "idle" is not about taking a break or resting when one is tired. It means that the godly wife does not waste a lot of time every day. She is hard working and resourceful and does not spend all day sitting in front of the TV watching soap opera's. For what it is worth, my mom used to watch her favorite soap opera for years, but she was never a lazy person. I'm trying to separate the concept of "laziness" from taking a break of the hard job of raising a family.
  - c) An "idle" wife might be one who spends a lot of time meddling in the affairs of others as opposed with being focused on the needs of her own family. The point is a Godly woman is not lazy and is primarily focused on the affairs of her household.
28. Verse 28: Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:
- a) OK, time for a show of hands: How many women out there have their kids wake up each morning and call them blessed? ☺ We don't get that in our household either unless we tell our children to say thank you for this thing or that thing.
  - b) Personally, I don't think this part of the verse is meant to be taken literally, especially when the children are young. The way children appreciate a godly mother is when they grow up and have children of their own.
    - i) Women learn the proper techniques of how to raise their children and model their mother's behavior of how to run the household. That is how children call their mother "blessed".

- c) As to the husband, that's a different story. The husband needs to take the time regularly to praise his wife for all of her hard work. Lord knows I don't do this enough myself and like most men, I am convicted by sentences like this.
  - i) The point is the husband appreciates all of her hard work and praises her!
  - ii) As I stated in the introduction, part of the Sabbath ritual in an Orthodox Jewish home is for the husband to read this section of Scripture to his wife. Part of the reason for doing that is so the husband can show his appreciation for her hard work. While the Christian husband is not required to do this, it is a good idea to take time every now and then to thank one's wife for all their hard work.
  - iii) Again, this is not about being perfect. The husband should not expect the wife to be perfect and vice versa. At the same time, the husband should thank the wife for all the hard work she does to run the household.
- 29. Verse 29: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all."
  - a) This verse gives the impression that the wife of this verse is superior to all women.
  - b) Let me tell you how to apply this verse: A husband is to see this verse and say to his wife how her efforts are superior to any other women he knows. I would rather be married to you than any other women. Your effort surpasses all other godly woman.
  - c) The husband is not to look at his wife as being perfect, but he is to praise her and say she is the best thing to happen to him, other than his own salvation. The efforts she makes to please him and run the household should be praised and appreciated regularly.
  - d) I'm not claiming to be perfect at this, but this is the "goal" to shoot for as a husband!
- 30. Verse 30: Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
  - a) If you have noticed, there was nothing up to this point about a woman's physical beauty. It is not until here in Verse 30 where one's physical beauty is put into perspective of what is really important in life. Beauty is reflective of the soul, mind and spirit.
  - b) A man or woman's physical beauty will fade over time. A woman who fears the Lord is far greater than any woman who is primarily concerned with her looks.
  - c) Can a man have a woman who is physically beautiful and fears the Lord too? Of course. I'm married to such a woman! As we get old, the physical beauty may change over time, but the love of the Lord will increase more and more with time.
  - d) The point is men in society spend way too much time cherishing the physical beauty of a woman as opposed to the things that will last for eternity. That's easy to do because it is easier to spot physical beauty than it is to spot a woman who fears the Lord.
    - i) It's time to define "fearing the Lord" again. That is a key phrase in Proverbs. It does not mean one walks around all day in fear. It means we have a desire to live a life pleasing to God in all that we do. It means we fear the judgment of God and realize we are accountable for our short comings in life. It is about the fear of judgment day and wanting to live a life pleasing to God.
  - e) Most men don't often appreciate a woman's true beauty (her fear of the Lord) until after one is married. Let's face it, young men are attracted to physical beauty. That is why this verse is important for young women to understand more than men. It is for women to understand their physical beauty will fade away one day. As a godly-man grows in age and wisdom, hopefully he will learn to appreciate that more every day.
- 31. Verse 31: Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.
  - a) The first part says to "give her the reward she has earned". The question is does that apply to her reward in heaven when she dies or something in this lifetime?
    - i) This verse appears to be saying in effect the godly wife should get the great eternal reward she deserves for this service.

- ii) The second part of this verse says, "Let her works bring her praise at the city gate". If you recall from my comments a few verses back, the city gates are where the city elders gather to make decisions and decide the day to day business of the city.
    - iii) The point here is that the wife's deeds are so good, they are to be praised among the men of the city. The idea is not the husband being praised, but the wife herself for the lifestyle she has lived.
  - b) In summary, this verse is about the woman's work being praised among the leading citizens of the town. The verse also has "higher overtones" in that God Himself will give a great eternal reward to this woman for the life she has lived.
32. Let me wrap this up with some final comments about being a godly wife.
- a) First, other than one's salvation, the most important decision one makes in life is who to pick as their spouse. Often, men don't appreciate the "inner beauty" of a woman until we have been with such woman for a good while. Initially we are attracted to one's physical beauty and it isn't until we get to know someone better that we get to see their "inner beauty".
  - b) The advice along that line is to pick a spouse who 1) fears God and 2) has this wonderful inner beauty where she is going to do her husband good (or his wife good) all the days of their lives. It is one's inner-beauty that lasts a lifetime. There are few pleasures in life greater than a good husband and wife who work as a team their life for God's glory.
    - i) Let me say a few words to the divorced, or those married to an unsaved spouse. If one was divorced prior to committing their lives to Christ, it is a non-issue. All past sins are forgiven and one is starting a new relationship. If one desires to get back with one's old wife after being a born again Christian, one has that option assuming the other person is willing.
    - ii) For the married person who is married to the unbeliever, remember that Paul teaches we should not leave that relationship as the believing spouse may win over the unbelieving spouse with their conduct. Here is where the conduct of Proverbs 31 comes into play. The spouse will watch one's actions far more than anything you say. Therefore, if the unbelieving spouse does not want to leave, the believing spouse is to spend the rest of their lives using their attitude toward God to win over the unbelieving spouse. (See 1st Corinthians 7:16).
  - c) Next, some final thoughts to the single people reading this:
    - i) The problem (including myself before I was married) is I spent too much time looking for the wrong type of person. It is not that one has to be perfect prior to getting married, and I still had lots of issues to work out, but often God wants to get us to a certain point.
    - ii) The point is if you are single and "haven't found the right person" a possible reason is God may want you to change before bringing the right person in your life. There may be some aspect of your personality God wants to work on prior to bringing the right person in one's lives.
    - iii) The next issue is the "type" of person to look for: Notice how little emphasis there is in this chapter on looks. Yes, looks are important to the young person and we want to be with someone we like to look at. At the same time, one has to remember those looks are going to fade over time and the "inner quality" is what is going to last forever.
    - iv) What to look for in a spouse? First of all, look for someone who puts God first in their life. If they do that, as a general rule they will treat you better. Paul commanded men to love their wives as Jesus loved the church. How much love is that? Enough to die for them! (Ephesians 5:25). If you have that aspect in a relationship, almost all other problems can be worked out.

- v) Once that is established, it is a matter of finding someone with similar values. Remember what interests you or your spouse enjoy changes over time. You must be able to enjoy or at least tolerate your spouses interests, without trying to fix them. One must also remember that it is very rare when all a man needs in life is his wife and all a woman needs is her husband. Both have some needs for friends (of their own sex) at times.
  - d) I want to end this with a comment of how I want to thank God for the wife He has given me, and that I should regularly make an effort to show my appreciation for her all the days of my life.
- 33. With that said, that's a wrap for Proverbs. We'll talk again soon in the next book I tackle.
  - a) On the next page is a list of sources I used for proverbs.
- 34. Let's pray: Father, thank you for all the lessons You have taught on through the book of Proverbs. Help us to have health relationships with our spouses and help us to pray for our spouse as opposed to trying to fix them ourselves. For our friends who are single and desire to be married, prepare them so when the right person comes, both will realize it. Finally help us to be the godly-husbands and wives You want us to be. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

## Supplement: Bibliography

"If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted *me* to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to further commentaries as listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in this study. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) and The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All the bible text is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over the past lessons. The specific commentaries on Leviticus are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to "audio" commentary means the information was gathered via the MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated. The PDF® reference means it is written text in Adobe PDF format.

1. Commentary on Proverbs Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at <http://joncourson.com>
2. Commentary on Proverbs by Bob Davies. They are available in MP3 ® format at [http://www.northcountrychapel.com/audio\\_studies/index.php](http://www.northcountrychapel.com/audio_studies/index.php)
3. Commentary on Proverbs by Chuck Missler, available in MP3 ® format at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>.
4. Commentary on the Old Testament, VOL. 6: Proverbs-Song Of Solomon By C.F. Keil & F. Delitzsch; Accessed electronically via QuickVerse® Software, from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved. Omaha, Nebraska
5. I also listed to a number of lectures on individual chapters via downloaded sermons via [www.sermonaudio.com](http://www.sermonaudio.com). While I don't know a lot of details about these pastors, I did learn from the lectures. The names includes Joe Morecraft on Chapter 2, Someone named "Joyce" on Chapter 30 and "Martin's" and "Barnett's" sections Chapter 31. If one clicks on say, "Chapter 31" of Proverbs via that web site, one will find these lectures.
6. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229
7. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: [www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm](http://www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm)
8. The Expositor's Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every verse of the Bible. (It is available at Christian bookstores.) Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this source. There are some lessons in Proverbs where I relied heavily upon the commentary of Proverbs.