

Study # 6 – Proverbs 31:10-31

A Wife of Noble Character, who can find?

Background

Many believe that King Lemuel is King Solomon. But we cannot know for certain. We do know from the text that Lemuel is a king and this chapter is a lesson that he learns from his mother.

And in verses 1-9 she tells her son of women, of wine and words. She tells him to beware of women and wine and tells him how to use words.

But in verse 10 she returns to her theme of women and outlines the type of woman her son should look for - a wife of noble character.

From a literary point of view this proverb (10-31) has been written in the form of an acrostic. It follows the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet

“Aleph is for woman of virtue

Beth refers to trust her husband shares

Gimmel is for work she does to help you

Daleth stands for how she seeks her wares.”¹

So this proverb does not so much build of a logical argument – as it does link a series of observations about a woman of virtue. This is an A to Z description of a woman with noble character. It is a composite. It is a complete picture, there is nothing lacking here in this description.

Questions

1. When many women read this proverb they often feel that they will never measure up to this woman. She seems far above any kind of obtainable reality. It is at this point that we need to remember that this is a composite. Take note that the focus of this text is the *character* of the woman – not the *deeds* of the woman. Why do you think character is more important than the deeds of this woman?
2. For those of you with children have you had a serious chat with them about what to look for in a spouse? What qualities would you look for in a spouse for your child? Is your list of qualities the same as Proverbs 31?
3. A woman of noble character is a woman who demonstrates her noble character through: her loyalty (verse 11,12) She is loyal to her husband. Describe loyalty. What does it look like to you? Why is it an important quality in a person/marriage?
4. Pastor Tom states that a wedding is not just a declaration of present love but it is a promise of future love. This is what makes the wedding so important, and different from simply living together. How would you describe your loyalty to your spouse? Is it dependent upon good circumstances or are you willing to be loyal through difficult times too? Read Romans 8:38-39. What does Romans 8 say about God’s future loyalty? Will it ever waiver?

5. In Proverbs 31:13-19 we read that the woman of noble character is a willing worker. How would you describe your attitude about work (in your place of employment and working around the house)? Are you a willing worker?
6. In Proverbs 31:20-22 we read of her love for others and verses 23-27 speaks of her light – the light of her character shines brightly upon her husband who is respected by others because of her. What kind of things can we do for our spouse so that they are held with respect?
7. According to verse 28 what should our response be toward a woman of noble character?
8. In verse 30 we read that this woman’s whole life is given over to God. “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.” What does it mean to fear God?
9. Pastor Tom suggests that when we read this description we are supposed to feel, “I will never measure up.” And as a result of that feeling we are to fling ourselves upon God for help and strength. We are to look to God to create in us this character. This is not a lifestyle we must adopt, as much as it is a life we must possess. It is the very life of Jesus. (Jesus is loyal – John 4:34. Jesus is working to glorify God – John 5:17. He is loving, he is the light of the world – John 8:12) When Jesus Christ is our life He then enables us to be this person of noble character. Do you find that truth freeing? Understandable?
10. The one thing missing from this text is failure. What do you do when you fail to be a person of noble character?

For reflection

Think about the front covers of magazines and newspapers that you see at the checkout stand of your local Wal-Mart. What kind of beauty is displayed there? Proverbs 31 tells us that “charm is deceptive, and beauty if fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.” From this we learn that there is an inner beauty, an authentic beauty that will never fade away. Do you know people who reflect this beauty? How did they get this way? Write down three things you think you could do to help you develop this inner beauty.

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me—
 All His wonderful passion and purity!
 O Thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine,
 Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. —Orsborn

For prayer

Ask God to develop this inner beauty in you. Yield yourselves completely to Christ, asking Him to rule in every part of your life and His character to shine through every aspect of your life.