

# A WOMAN WHO FEARS THE LORD WILL BE PRAISED

Proverbs 31:10-31



August 11, 2019 | DAVID ANDERSON

We are rapidly coming to an end of our study of Proverbs. How does Proverbs end? Is Solomon going to give us one last pep talk on the value of wisdom? Are we going to hear more about wealth or friendships or the futility of this world's ways? Is there more Solomon wants to say about the simple, the fool, the mocker? We have been in Proverbs for a year. How would you end it? It ends with a poem.

It's a poem about a woman who has been transformed and liberated by the God of the universe, and the impact such a transformation has on her family and community. Proverbs 31:10-31 describes a much different ideal woman than what our culture is selling. It's not about tiny waists or perfect teeth, long flowing hair or beautiful dresses. This woman's most treasured characteristic is that she fears the Lord. The Book of Proverbs ends with these two verses, "Charm is deceitful and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the LORD will be praised. <sup>31</sup> Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates" (31:30-31).

This poem is carefully composed, and like Psalm 119, each section begins with another letter of the Hebrew alphabet (aleph, beth, gimel...). This poem was not written by a husband who had forgotten his wife on Mother's Day or their anniversary. It's not a poem written hastily as he is picking up a dozen roses on a street corner or running into CVS on the way home from work. This poem is a thoughtful description and praise of a woman who has been transformed by the grace of God. For 3000 years it has been a gift to the people of God and I trust it will be a gift to you this morning.

PROVERBS 31:10-31	A WOMAN WHO FEARS THE LORD
<p><sup>10</sup> Who can find a wife of noble character? For her value is far more than rubies. <sup>11</sup> The heart of her husband has confidence in her, and he has no lack of gain. <sup>12</sup> She brings him good and not evil all the days of her life. <sup>13</sup> She obtains wool and flax, and she is pleased to work with her hands.</p>	<p>Many commentaries think this is a poem that is modeled after the ancient hero hymns of victorious soldiers coming back from battle. Instead of the victorious soldier it is this noble woman who is rare and precious, for her value is far more than rubies. She stands out and is so influential over family, the ministries of her family and the financial success of her family.</p>
<p><sup>14</sup> She is like the merchant ships; she brings her food from afar. <sup>15</sup> She also gets up while it is still night, and provides food for her household and a portion to her female servants.</p>	<p>She is thoughtful and hardworking in caring for the needs of her family and loves to provide meals that are considerate.</p>
<p><sup>16</sup> She considers a field and buys it; from her own income she plants a vineyard. <sup>17</sup> She begins her work vigorously, and she strengthens her arms. <sup>18</sup> She knows that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out in the night. <sup>19</sup> Her hands take hold of the distaff, and her hands grasp the spindle.</p>	<p>She is contributing to the home and has two jobs outside of the home. She is bold. She considers and buys it from her own earnings. She is an equal partner in every aspect of administering the family's assets. Her husband trusts her and she flourishes. This woman also doesn't feel like her life is wasted on her family.</p>
<p><sup>20</sup> She extends her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hand to the needy. <sup>21</sup> She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all</p>	<p>Her hands are also active in caring for the poor and needy. In her home, she wants to create an environment that is beautiful, comfortable,</p>

<p>of her household are clothed with scarlet.<sup>22</sup> She makes for herself coverlets; her clothing is fine linen and purple.<sup>23</sup> Her husband is well-known in the city gate when he sits with the elders of the land. Verse <sup>24</sup> She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.</p>	<p>thoughtful and meaningful. Her noble character does not disqualify her husband from leadership and opportunities.</p>
<p><sup>25</sup> She is clothed with strength and honor; she can laugh at the time to come.</p>	<p>She is not a bitter, complaining, negative person. She smiles at the future. How can someone smile at the future? Because her world is bigger than the immediate demands of today. She is confident in her future, her God and His plans.</p>
<p><sup>26</sup> She opens her mouth with wisdom, and loving instruction is on her tongue.<sup>27</sup> She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.<sup>28</sup> Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband also praises her:<sup>29</sup> "Many daughters have done valiantly, but you surpass them all!"  <sup>30</sup> Charm is deceitful and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the LORD will be praised.  <sup>31</sup> Give her credit for what she has accomplished, and let her works praise her in the city gates.</p>	<p>This is a woman who has learned to fear the Lord. Remember in Proverbs we can't separate fear of the Lord from humility. Fearing the Lord is realizing everything is created and sustained by Him. The foolish woman says, "I can do life on my own; I know better than God." The wise woman says, "I can't do life on my own; I do not know better than God." We are in a foreign and hostile country and every woman out there has to decide who they are going to listen to and who are they going to cling to. This woman has humbly received God's care and allowed it transform her into a powerful agent of God. As a result, loving instruction is on her tongue.</p>

I personally don't think this is primarily written to women, but to young men who will be future husbands. It's not just a laundry list of qualities to look for; rather, it is a beautiful description of when a god-fearing husband partners in launching a god-fearing wife into kingdom work. Behind this woman is a man who knows how incredibly gifted his wife is and does everything in his power for those gifts to be realized.

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

Husbands/Fathers:

- How are you lovingly sacrificing to liberate and launch your wife or daughter into her giftedness and kingdom work?
- What are you asking the Holy Spirit to change in your heart to facilitate her confidence and success?

Wives/Mothers:

- In what areas of your life, your marriage, your children's lives, or your grandchildren's lives is God asking you to humbly trust Him?
- Where is God wanting to stretch you in your giftedness, passion and vision for life?
- Is there a specific area of your heart where the Holy Spirit has been nudging? Are you responding or resisting?

Young Men/Women:

- When it comes to relating to the opposite sex, are you stuck in first-impressions and the painfully superficial world of our culture?
- As you mature in Jesus Christ, are you pursuing a skinny waist, perfect teeth and beautiful clothing, or is your heart consumed with the strength and honor that is the direct result of fearing the Lord above everything else?
- What are you asking the Holy Spirit to change in your heart to facilitate your future?