

## (D1:THE HEART, D2:THE HOME, D3:MINISTRY) An Excellent Woman Proverbs 31:10-31

### The Wellspring Purpose and Disciplines:

#### I. Introduction and Context

##### A. Introduction, Pr 31:1-31

- i. Instructions for a wise king, 31:1-10
- ii. A description of a wise woman, 31:11-31
  - a. "A woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised." (Pr 31:30)
  - b. The Fear of the Lord
    - An Old Testament description of saving faith
    - Reverent love and devotion to God
    - Does not hide or run away from God, but clings to Him
    - Amazement at God's love and the perfection of His ways
    - Dread at the thought of sinning against Him
    - Delight in the ability to obey Him as a fruit of saving faith
    - Consumed with the desire to please Him
    - Results of being reconciled to God

- “It is the affectionate reverence by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father’s law. God’s wrath is so bitter and his love so sweet that we have this earnest desire to please Him and to fear Him, so that we will not sin against Him.” (*He 12:28-29*) - Charles Bridges, *Proverbs*

## B. Context, Pr 1-31

- i. Primary Author and Setting of Proverbs, Pr 1:1
  - a. Author - primarily Solomon (also “the wise,” Pr 22-24; Agur, Pr 30; Lemuel, Pr 31)
  - b. Setting - Era of the Kings, under the Mosaic Covenant
    - Blessings (e.g., Possession of the land, strength, fruitfulness, safety, provision, health, peace, protection, Lev 26, Dt 28)
    - Cursings (e.g., loss of the land, weakness, unfruitfulness, danger and fear from famine, disease, pestilence, enemies, Lev 26, Dt 28)
- ii. Audience and Purpose of Proverbs, Pr 1:2-6
  - a. Audience
    - The naive, Pr 1:4; 8:5
    - The youth, Pr 1:4
    - The wise, Pr 1:5
    - The understanding, Pr 1:5
    - The sluggard, Pr 6:6-11
    - The simple-minded, scoffers, fools, Pr 1:22; 8:5
    - Any who will listen, Pr 8:2-4
    - “My son” (MOST FREQUENT), Pr 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1, 10, 20; 5:1, 7, 20; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1, 24; 8:32; 23:15, 19, 26; 24:13, 21; 27:11; 31:2

- b. Purpose - to train in wisdom
- iii. The Two Paths of Proverbs, Pr 1:7; Proverbs 1-31
  - a. Fear of the Lord - wisdom, light, life, truth, righteousness, fruitfulness, peace
  - b. Despising the Lord - foolishness, darkness, death, deceit, evil, indolence, discord

## II. The Excellent Woman of Pr 31:10-31

### A. Her value (to her husband in particular), 31:10-12

**Pr 3:10 An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.**

- **Her value compared to wisdom's value:**

*Pr 3:13a, 15 How blessed is the man who finds wisdom...she is more precious than jewels...*

- **An excellent woman:**

*Pr 12:4 An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who shames him is like rottenness in his bones.*

*Rt 3:11 "Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence."*

**Pr 3:11 The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain.**

- **Trustworthy:**

*Pr 11:13 He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter.*

*Pr 14:5 A trustworthy witness will not lie, But a false witness utters lies.*

*Pr 7:18-19 "Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning; Let us delight ourselves with caresses. For my husband is not at home, He has gone on a long journey..."*

- **No lack of gain:**

*Pr 1:10-11, 13 My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, let us ambush the innocent without cause;...we will find all kinds of precious wealth, we will fill our houses with spoil..."*

**Pr 31:12 She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.**

- **Does him good:**

*Gen 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."*

**B. Her work, Pr 31:13-19 - the antithesis of the sluggard**

- **Characteristics of the sluggard:**

- Lazy, Pr 14:23
- Sleeps excessively, Pr 6:9
- Refuses to work, Pr 21:25
- Driven by the desires of the flesh, Pr 21:25; Pr 13:4
- Fails to plan and prepare, Pr 20:4
- Poor as a result of laziness, Pr 20:4
- Fearful, Pr 22:13
- Makes excuses, Pr 22:13
- Procrastinates, Pr 24:30-34
- Not sensible, Pr 24:30
- Pridefully wise in his own eyes, Pr 26:12, 14, 16

*Pr 14:23 In all labor there is profit, But mere talk leads only to poverty.*

*Pr 6:9 How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?*

*Pr 21:25 The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, For his hands refuse to work;*

*Pr 13:4 The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, But the soul of the diligent is made fat.*

*Pr 20:4 The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing.*

*Pr 22:13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside; I will be killed in the streets!"*

*Pr 24:30-34 I passed by the field of the sluggard And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense, And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; Its surface was covered with nettles, And its stone wall was broken down. When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction.*

*"A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest," Then your poverty will come as a robber And your want like an armed man.*

*Pr 26:12, 14, 16 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him... 14 As the door turns on its hinges, So does the sluggard on his bed... 16 The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes Than seven men who can give a discreet answer.*

**Pr 31:13 She looks for wool and flax And works with her hands in delight.**

- **Contrast with the adulteress:**

*Pr 7:18 "Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning; Let us delight ourselves with caresses."*

**Pr 31:14 She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar.**

**Pr 31:15 She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens.**

- **Rest and sleep:**

*Ps 127:1-2 Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain. 2 It is vain for you to rise up early, To retire late, To eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.*

**Pr 31:16 She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard.**

- **Buying and selling land under the Mosaic Covenant:**

*Lev 25:23 "The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me."*

*Lev 25:13-17, 26-28 "On this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his own property. 14 If you make a sale, moreover, to your friend or buy from your friend's hand, you shall not wrong one another. 15 Corresponding to the number of years after the jubilee, you shall buy from your friend; he is to sell to you according to the number of years of crops. 16 In proportion to the extent of the years you shall increase its price, and in proportion to the fewness of the years you shall diminish its price, for [it is] a number of crops he is selling to you. 17 So you shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God... 24 Thus for every piece of your property,*

*you are to provide for the redemption of the land. 25 If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold. 26 Or in case a man has no kinsman, but so recovers his means as to find sufficient for its redemption, 27 then he shall calculate the years since its sale and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and so return to his property. 28 But if he has not found sufficient means to get it back for himself, then what he has sold shall remain in the hands of its purchaser until the year of jubilee; but at the jubilee it shall revert, that he may return to his property."*

**Pr 31:17 She girds herself with strength And makes her arms strong.**

- **Strength:**

*Pr 24:5a A wise man is strong...*

*George Lawson: "As rust gathers on metals that are seldom used, so sluggishness of disposition contracts a rust on the powers of the body and mind... The virtuous woman is of a very different temper. She declines not any part of her duty through aversion to toil; and by exerting her strength with a cheerful mind, she improves it." (Proverbs)*

**Pr 31:18 She senses that her gain is good; Her lamp does not go out at night.**

- **Her gain compared to the gain of wisdom:**

*Pr 3:14 For her (wisdom) profit is better than the profit of silver And her gain better than fine gold.*

- **Her lamp does not go out at night - contrasts:**

*Pr 7:5, 7-9 That they may keep you from an adulteress, From the foreigner who flatters with her words... 7 And I saw among the naive, And discerned among the youths A young man lacking sense, 8 Passing through the street near her corner; And he takes the way to her house, 9 In the twilight, in the evening, In the middle of the night and in the darkness.*

*Pr 13:9 The light of the righteous rejoices, But the lamp of the wicked goes out.*

**Pr 31:19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hands grasp the spindle.**

**C. Her fruit, Pr 31:20-24**

**Pr 31:20 She extends her hand to the poor, And she stretches out her hands to the needy.**

- **Care for the poor in Israel:**

*Dt 15:7-8 "If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; 8 but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks."*

**Pr 31:21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet.**

**Pr 31:22 She makes coverings for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple.**

- **Contrast with the adulteress:**

*Pr 7:10 And behold, a woman comes to meet him, Dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart.*

**Pr 31:23 Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land.**

**Pr 31:24 She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies belts to the tradesmen.**

**D. Her heart, Pr 31:25-27**

**Pr 31:25 Strength and dignity are her clothing, And she smiles at the future.**

**Pr 31:26 She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.**

- **Wise speech:**

*Pr 25:11-12 Like apples of gold in settings of silver Is a word spoken in right circumstances. Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise reprovew to a listening ear.*

**Pr 31:27 She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness.**

**E. Her praise, Pr 31:28-31**

**Pr 31:28-31 Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying: 29 "Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all." 30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. 31 Give her the product of her hands, And let her works praise her in the gates.**

***What is praiseworthy about her? In what ways does her life display wisdom?***

- The priority of her household (and for the married woman, her husband)
  - Trustworthy
  - Content
  - The focus of her efforts
  - Looks well to the ways of her household
- Her work ethic (not a sluggard!)
  - Initiative
  - Diligence
  - Planning, preparation for needs
  - Skill
  - Prudence
  - Does not eat the bread of idleness (chooses not to develop a taste for it)



- Her attitude/character
  - Trustworthy
  - Works with delight
  - Faithful stewardship
  - Loves and does what is good
  - Righteous
  - Appropriate
  - Not fearful
  - Smiles at the future
  - Humble
  - Strength
  - Dignity
  - Obedient to God and His Word
  - Compassionate and merciful
  - Speaks wisdom, teaches kindness (including God's Word and character)

### III. Our response

- Praise the wise, excellent, God-fearing woman!
- Learn from her example.
  - Embrace the humble pursuit of wisdom to which the book of Proverbs exhorts us; let the Proverbs 31 woman be our teacher.
  - Look to Jesus, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom (Co 2:2-3), to forsake sin (Ro 8:12-13) and walk in newness of life (Ro 6:4, 11-14).