



## "REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

### PROVERBS

### LESSON 25

Writing Proverbs 31 is a daunting task for sure. I've been praying, procrastinating, then praying some more. How do I write about the perfect woman, or a Scripture text that is so familiar and valuable to each of us as women? I feel like I'm walking on "Holy Woman" ground! ☺ After I got over my own fears, I realized that I'm simply going to walk us through the verses and let the Holy Spirit do the talking, so I feel much better. With that being said, let's jump right in, shall we? Remember to begin with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten us, teach us, and challenge us as we read through these important words.

#### First Day

1. Let's begin by reading Proverbs 31:1-31. It's definitely broken up into two sections, but first, take the time to read it as a whole. Write your first impressions and thoughts. Note any questions you have as well. Answer the following questions: Who is writing and whom is it written to?
  - A. Verses 1-9
  - B. Verses 10-31

3. It's unusual that the closing words of Proverbs are a mother's words. How did Proverbs open in Proverbs 1:8? What is significant about this?
  
4. What warnings do you find in the first section? What was the reader told to avoid? What things was he to advocate?

King Lemuel is not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. Like I mentioned last week, I had no idea that the authorship of this Proverbs was at question, among some scholars. Although, like Agur, some believe this to be another name for Solomon, ascribing the words of Proverbs 31 to him, most believe it really is a King named Lemuel, who is simply recalling some wise advice from his mother. Some also believe that while he penned verses 1-9, verses 10-31, which describe the woman of valor, may have been written by someone else because it is very different and unique in form. I'm choosing to not go into the debate on who wrote it because the majority of scholars accept Lemuel as the writer of all 31 verses. I'm going to assume that position as I write this lesson. Please feel free to study more about that on your own.

John Phillips wrote, "The book of Proverbs begins with the wise words of a father and ends with the wise words of a mother. "My son" said the father in Proverbs 1:8. "My son," said the mother in Proverbs 31:2. First and last, the home is the bastion of the nation. As the home is, so is the homeland. This lesson should be written in large letters over all schools, courts, halls of congress, television studios, bookstores, and homes."

5. It's easy to read past the significance of verse one. This king is actually recalling the words his mother taught him. As moms, how can this verse challenge/encourage us?

6. Read verses 1-2. How do you think verse 2 is a way of expressing how important and special the son was to the mother?

The phrase "And what, my son" can be translated as "take heed and listen" rather than being actual questions. The "vow" she's referring to may be one she took before she was pregnant, as Hannah did in 1 Samuel 1:11, telling the Lord that if He blessed her with a son, she would dedicate him back to the Lord. She reminds him that being obsessed with women will have the same effect on him as being obsessed with liquor, and he should avoid both. Both will lower his inhibitions, cause him to lose his bearings, cloud his judgment, and open the door to sin.

7. Explain the warning given in 4-7. Most believe that verses 6-7 are spoken with sarcasm, rather than as advice. Why are these words so important concerning a king's behavior? Do you think the words are for you and I as well?

8. How does adultery have a debilitating effect on a person, similar to drinking? How can "wine and women" both destroy? (Or obviously men...)

9. What spoke to your heart the most from today's lesson? How did it challenge, convict, or encourage you?

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised!" Proverbs 31:30

### Second Day

Work on your memory verse. It's such a great reminder of what our priority as women should be, isn't it?

1. Today let's begin by reading Proverbs 31:1-9. His mom first warns him about some things to avoid, then strongly reminds him of some responsibilities that he does have regarding being a champion for justice. What counsel does she give in verses 8-9?
  
2. Why is it so important for a king to protect the poor, the destitute, and the oppressed? Instead of abusing his power as a result of indulging in wine and women, how should he use his power?
  
3. What causes some people to become "oppressed"? What kinds of situations render some people unable to speak up for themselves?
  
4. Are there any people in your life that are unable to speak up for themselves because of their financial, social, or emotional status or situation? Does someone need you to speak up for them or plead their cause? How can you practically live out this verse?
  
5. Ok, so ... it's time to jump into our next section. Read verses 10-31. What is your overall opinion of this woman? What are some "character traits" you see in her?
  
6. Does the question posed in verse 10 suggest that there are no virtuous, or "noble" women? What's he saying?

The King's mom knows what type of woman he should be looking for. This isn't an "actual" woman I don't believe, but what a noble woman's life should look like, and

what should be admired. The word "virtuous" is an inclusive term, referring to strength, resourcefulness, character, and wealth. Some translate it as "capable" as well. Many of us read these verses and give up before we even finish reading them, thinking we'll never be able to attain the "perfection" that seems to flow from her life. Let's not do that today! Let's remember that these words should be an encouragement and a reminder to us of what's important, where and on what we should spend our time, talents, and resources, and know this is just an "example" of a woman with noble character. Don't let her scare you or overwhelm you. Let's allow her to teach us, shall we?

This is an acrostic, or alphabetical, poem. Its twenty-two verses in the original Hebrew begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. An acrostic is a commonly used memory device, especially at that time. Irving Jensen advises us to read the stanza with this outline in mind:

- (a) A good woman sought (31:10)
- (b) A good woman described (31:28-31)
- (c) A good woman praised (31:28-31)

7. We've looked at the "good woman sought" in verse 10. We know she's rare and she's more valuable than rubies! Now let's look at how she's described. Read verses **11-31** and answer the following questions.

8. How many times is her husband mentioned? What does it tell us about him/her? What kind of wife is she?

9. If you're a wife, do the same words describe you? Does he trust you? Do you give him any reason not to? Does he believe you're only doing him good and not evil? Are you a jewel in his crown or a dagger in his heart? Is he able to praise you? (Notice I didn't ask IF he praises you, but if he's ABLE to?)

## 10. What are some ways that we, as wives, can bring our husbands "evil"?

P31's (my nickname for her) husband has complete confidence in her. Not because she's perfect, but because she is an asset to him rather than a liability. She has good intentions towards him, not evil ones! Because she manages their household so well, he can trust her. He doesn't lack anything of value, speaking of household goods. If you're a wife, spend some time reflecting on these thoughts. We don't have to be able to "make our own tapestry" but we can seek to do him good all the days of our lives, right? Pray over this section.

### Third Day

#### **What's your memory verse?**

1. Read Proverbs 31:10-31 again. What do verses 13, 19, 22, and 24 have in common?
  
2. Are these verses saying that you and I have to know how to sew or weave to be considered "noble"? What are the essence of these verses? What are some of the key phrases in them?
  
3. Are you eager to do the things the Lord has put before you and called you to do? Is there a sense of "productivity" in your life or are you careless and lazy? Ponder these verses ...
  
4. According to verse 13-15, is P31 idle? What kinds of things is she seeking; items to take care of her family or things for her own pleasure? How resourceful is she?

5. According to verse 15, she has household help but she still gets up to take care of her family. Again, she puts the well-being of her household before her own comfort. How about you? What are your priorities?
  
6. These verses show us that P31 is a good mother. What other verses talk about the type of mom she is?
  
7. Read verse 16. It's unusual for a woman to be doing this in those days. Most scholars believe that this tells us that her household was wealthy and she had money to invest. How would you apply verse 16 to us today? (Think outside of the box ...)
  
8. From these verses today, what really speaks to your heart the most? Do you work willingly? Do you work hard? Do you put the needs of your husband and your household above your own? How resourceful are you?

There's a lot to think about, isn't there? Her life screams self-discipline, don't you think? She would have to discipline and prioritize her life to be able to accomplish all she does. I think that's a good lesson for us as well. Learn to stay clear from all the things that tend to distract you, then get focused on what matters. Let's do it ladies!

#### **Fourth Day**

**Work on your memory verse. This one needs to stick in our hearts for life.**

1. Today let's begin by reading Proverbs 31:11-31 again. (It helps to keep starting from the beginning.) What does verse 17 tell us about her?

This verse seems to be interpreted in different ways. Some believe it simply means she keeps herself fit so she can do the work that she's called to do (planting, etc.). Some believe that this "represents her spiritual preparation for hard work and her physical competence to accomplish it. The metaphor points to her psychic and spiritual motivation and preparation that equips her powerful body. Thus girded mentally and spiritually, she strengthens her arms, signifying she both resolves to make her arms strong and that she has the strength and endurance to complete the task to which she commits herself after prudent evaluation." (Waltke)

2. How about you? Do you keep yourself fit for the task of taking care of your household or do you neglect your body, both physically and spiritually?

3. Read verse 18. The phrase "her lamp does not go out by night" refers to her ability to plan ahead. She has foresight, like the five virgins mentioned in Matthew 25:4. She is careful to think through things and plan accordingly as best she can. How about you? Are you "last minute Lisa" or "procrastination Penny"? Are there areas you can plan ahead better to make things more efficient, etc.? How does "not" doing this complicate life at times?

4. Read verse 20. What character trait does this verse reflect?

P31 doesn't only think about her own family and household, she's generous with others, especially the poor and needy. Her eyes are focused on others. So often we, as moms, focus on making sure the needs of our families are met without even thinking about ministering to those in need. This is also selfishness, right? We

need to look beyond the four walls of our own home and look out into the world that's hurting around us.

5. Well, you know I'm going to ask this. Do you extend your hand to the poor and needy? Do you reach out to help? Where is your focus?

6. According to verse 21, P31 is prepared and ready. How does that take away the "fear of snow"?

I read that the word "scarlet" in verse 21 can also be translated as "double" because the two Hebrew words are formed with the same consonants. The bright color of scarlet would not guarantee warmth, but the double thickness would.

7. How "prepared and ready" do you live? That again speaks of thinking things through and planning ahead. Do you often get caught "unprepared"?

8. Let's look at verse 23 again. We know her husband is not a king because he's sitting in the gates rather than on a throne. The "gates" were the center of the political and judicial life in the Israelite cities. The elders and other authorities gathered there to decide policy for the community, settle disputes, etc. Hubbard wrote, "The wife's accomplishments not only increased her husband's stature but enhanced his freedom to participate in public life." Write your thoughts on this.

9. Does the way you personally live your life honor your husband's leadership? Does it enhance his ability to serve? Does your reputation bring him honor or dishonor? Do others admire him because of you, or pity him? ☹

10. Let me ask one last question. Do you show respect to your husband? Do you build him up? Have you been encouraging his strengths, helping him in his weaknesses, counseling him wisely, and building up his confidence? Do you "publically applaud" him? Why is this so important?

We'll end on that note. I find this very convicting. I pray that God will open my eyes to the areas that I fall so short. I pray He would begin by stirring in me a desire to change and grow as a wife, a mother, and a Christian woman.

### Fifth Day

**Write out your verse from memory.**

1. Read Proverbs 31:11-31, then focus on verses 25-31. I think I love these verses the most because we get to look at her heart. What does verse 25 tell us about her? Why is it important to be able to "rejoice in times to come" or "laugh at the future"?

I love this verse because it reminds me of the confidence we can have in the Lord. We don't have to worry about what's ahead, we just need to trust in God. That's been spelled out very clearly throughout our study in Proverbs. She doesn't laugh in a careless way, she just knows she doesn't have to live in fear. I love this quote by Philips, "As her strength had been yesterday, so it would be tomorrow. Come what may, no foe could daunt her; no fear could haunt her. She was not protected by her cleverness, success, and wealth, or by her husband's power and reputation. She was protected by her character and her convictions." In other words, by what she knew to be true about God!

2. Can you look the future in the face and have no fear? Do you have that type of confidence in God? If not, how do you think you get it? How did she?

3. Read verse 26. P31 uses her tongue wisely. When she opens her mouth, what comes out? (Luke 6:45) In what other ways do we typically "open our mouth" rather than with wisdom?
  
4. Do you tend to speak kindly to those in your home, especially when you're tired? What about to those at work that perhaps don't do things the way you've asked them to? Or what about speaking to the nosy neighbor?? How "kind" are you?
  
5. In verse 27 we discuss idleness again, reminding us that she was attentive and aware of what was happening in her home. How "aware" are you of what's going on in the lives of your children, husband, or even friends? Are you attentive to their needs, aware of the problems and trials they face, knowing how to pray specifically for them? In what ways can you grow in this?
  
6. Read verses 28-29. What "rewards" will the P31 receive for her labor according to these verses? Not only will she receive rewards in Heaven for her obedience, but here on earth as well.
  
7. Do you think your children will someday rise up and call you blessed? What does that mean? If they don't, does that mean you automatically did a bad job?
  
8. Do you take time to rise up and call your mother blessed? Do you acknowledge her and the work it took to raise you? Do you ever stop and thank her for "watching over the ways of her household" and making sure you were cared for?

I'll ask again ... have you, and how often, do you sing her praises to others? (If you feel your mom isn't "worthy" of that, how about thanking and praising the Lord for being your protector and covering?)

9. Read our last verses, 30-31, which is our great memory verse. What is the beauty secret of our model woman? What is the lasting quality that makes her forever beautiful?

10. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. How does this verse reinforce that?

I love that when it comes down to it, the "model" woman is the spiritual woman. It's the woman who takes good care of her spiritual life, who carefully cultivates the soil of her heart, and makes sure that action follows her faith. The beauty secret in those days, and the beauty secret now, is that a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised!! The fact that her "own works would praise her at the gates" was unusual as well. Women weren't usually honored like that in Israel, but I read that "unusual women called for unusual recognition." Ladies, do your works praise you in the gates? Does your reputation speak loudly about your character and convictions? Have you stayed on the right path; the path of righteousness?

We opened with the importance of "fearing the Lord" and we close with it as well. By fearing God, we can live both wisely and righteously, which is the whole message of Proverbs, right? I pray that each of us took these weekly lessons to heart and asked God to change us, to mold us, to teach us, to train us, and to keep us on the right path. Thank you for joining us on the path through Proverbs. I've enjoyed every chapter! I pray you have too!

11. One last question. How would you briefly sum up what you learned in the book of Proverbs?

**"Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised! Proverbs 31:30**