

PROVERBS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Proverbs chapter 30 as we continue our study through the Word of God and tonight we will be finishing up the book of Proverbs. Tonight we are going to be introduced to at least one different person or maybe two different people who finished up writing the book of Proverbs under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The first one is Agur and we will read about him in Proverbs chapter 30. And then in Proverbs chapter 31 we will read about King Lemuel. I will expound on each of these men as we come to them in these chapters. With that as our background, let's begin reading in Proverbs chapter 30, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

PROVERBS 30**VERSE 1**

1. All we know of this man Agur is that God has allowed his words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to become part of His Word. And it seems that he has dedicated these words to maybe his students, Ithiel and Ucal. But again, we don't know anything more of this man Agur except that he was a believer in the God of Israel and the Lord gave him these words to share with us. So let's see what lessons the Lord has for us.

VERSES 2-4

1. Agur is saying that he cannot know he cannot understand an infinite God. That truly is the cry of man. How can we, with our finite minds know and understand an infinite God? Not only is He all-knowing or omniscient, but He is present everywhere or omnipresent. Also, He is all-powerful or omnipotent. That is what Agur is saying here about God and he seems frustrated that he can't know Him like he wants to! Who can know such a great Being, a great God?

The reality is that no one can truly understand Him fully. So how can we know God? In John 3:13 Jesus tells us, **“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.”** Let me make this point and then I will expound on what Jesus is saying here in John 3:13. Agur says, **“What is His Son's name.”** So now we have the Son, yes right here in the Old Testament we see the Son of God being mentioned.

Now since Jesus was in heaven with the Father we can know God the Father through the Son. Jesus said in John 1:18, **“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”**

We can know, not fully because how can we know an infinite God, but Jesus has declared to us what the Father is about because, as Jesus said to Philip, **“... ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, “Show us the Father”?””** John 14:9.

And let me also say this. If you could know all there is to know about God, understand Him completely, then He truly would not be worth worshiping for He would be just like you and me. We cannot fully understand an infinite God with our finite minds, but we can know Him through His Son and through the Word, the written revelation of Himself as we will see in the next few verses.

VERSES 5-6

1. We are living in a day when pastors, church leaders and Christians don't believe this is true; they don't see the importance of it being true that the Scriptures are pure. Now what was Agur just wondering about? He was wondering about God, how to know Him and how to know His Son and now Agur tells us that it is the Word of God which has been tested in the fire and found to be true that reveal these things to us.

It is not that the Bible contains the Words of God but it is the Words of God from Genesis through the book of Revelation. If that is not true then each person has to decide what is of God and what is not and that would be a mess. Imagine a book that contained the emergency evacuation instructions from a building. The problem is that not all that information is accurate, some other information was placed in there as well and you did not know what was accurate and what was not.

Now imagine you are in a fire and here is the book with instructions on how to get out of the building. The problem is that some instructions that will lead you into danger. How are you going to decide what is true and what is error? Are you going to guess, trial and error? If you do that and you are wrong you are dead! The same is true here, it is either all God's Word or none of it is God's Word, there is no in-between!

Remember what Paul said in II Timothy 3:16-17, **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**

Paul tells us that **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God”** and that phrase **“given by inspiration of God”** in the Greek is THEOPNEUSTOS, (teh-op'-nyoo-stos) and it literally means “God-breathed.” All Scripture comes from God. Now some would argue that point, but that is the reality. Paul is not just speaking of the Old Testament here, but from Genesis and ultimately through the book of Revelation. In I Timothy 5:18 Paul quotes out of the Gospel of Luke stating that it is Scripture. In II Peter 3:16 Peter tells us that Paul’s writings are part of the Scriptures. And thus, the entire Bible is God’s Word to us!

The Bible was written over a 1500-year time span. More than forty different authors from all walks of life – from kings to peasants, wrote it. It was written on three different continents – Africa, Asia and Europe. It was written in three different languages – Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. There are a variety of literary styles. It addresses hundreds of controversial subjects and yet there is harmony. And it is the unfolding story of God’s love for sinful man.

Prophetically it is awesome because what God has said would take place, has or will. There are over 300 prophecies of Christ’s first coming and all of them were fulfilled down to the tiniest detail. Some argue that the Bible, over the years has many errors as it was copied. Look at the facts, the New Testament alone we see not more than one-one thousandth of the text is in question and not one significant doctrine is in question. The Old Testament is no different. Thus, God’s Word is accurate, it is truth!

Paul tells us that God's Word is "**profitable**" or helpful for us and he lists four ways that it is helpful to us:

- A. DOCTRINE** – God's Word tells us what is right.
- B. REPROOF** – God's Word tells us what is wrong.
- C. CORRECTION** – God's Word tells us how to get right when we have gone astray.
- D. INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS** – God's Word tells us how to stay right.

God's Word makes us complete, it equips us for service. As you read God's Word, as you apply it to your life, by the power of God's Spirit, a believer will be able to meet the demands of righteousness, he will know what God desires of him and he will be able to stand strong, not for salvation but as evidence that a person is saved. Thus, Satan leads pastors and people away from God's Word because God's Word is living and it is powerful and it will transform our lives if we allow it to. Paul's warning to Timothy and to us is to be students of the Word of God if you want to stand strong against the perilous times and the perilous men that have come in and are coming in these last days! What a powerful lesson for us!

2. Not only do they not believe God's Word to be true but many add to God's Word or take away from God's Word and that too is foolishness. In the end you will find that God was right and you were wrong and there are consequences to adding to or taking away from God's Word!

We see this often with the cults who make their own writings, their own traditions with the same authority as the Bible and that will never fly because God's Word is pure, it is true and the writings of man are just that, the writings of man and they are not pure. They don't pass the test for as they are tried in the fire they are all burned up!

And what if you add to or take away from God's Word? In Revelation 22:18-19 for instance, we are told, "**For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.**" In other words, don't mess with the Word of God!

VERSES 7-9

1. Notice carefully this petition that Agur brings before the Lord. First of all he wants to live an honest life. Secondly he is asking God to give him just what he needs to live, not too little or not too much. Why? Because prosperity seems to ruin people spiritually, it drives them from God. They are too busy using the toys that they bought that they don't have time for God! On the other hand we see that poverty causes people to curse God for their condition, to do things that are wrong.

As one person said, "Never bless me above my capacity to love You!" I like that and thus, we need to be content in what God has given to us. It is as Paul said in Philippians 4:11-13, "**Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**" May we learn to be content in the Lord!

VERSE 10

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, “**Do not accuse and hurt a servant before his master, lest he curse you, and you be held guilty [of adding to the burdens of the lowly].**” And I think it is similar to what Solomon said in Proverbs 26:17, “**He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own Is like one who takes a dog by the ears.**” What Solomon is saying here and I think it goes along with what Agur is saying is that we need to be wise and stay out of things that are of no concern to us because if we don’t we may get bitten!

In the New Testament Paul picks up on this in Romans 14:4 when he said, “**Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.**” In other words don’t meddle in another person’s affairs when you don’t understand what is going on.

VERSES 11-14

1. I think Agur nails it and we see this at the forefront of our society today. Agur gives to us four points regarding this generation. First of all they are *disrespectful to parents* and thus, they are breaking the fifth Commandment.

Secondly, this generation is *self-righteous*, there is no sense of shame, they flaunt their sin and they think that everything is fine. They live in sin and they have no problem with it.

The third point of this generation is that they are *prideful and arrogant*. Rabbi Simeon Ben Jochai fits this picture as he said, “If there are only two righteous men in the world, I and my son are the two. If only one, I am he.” I think that fits the picture of this generation.

And the fourth point of this generation is that they are *fiercely oppressive* in that their greed has caused them to hurt others, especially the less fortunate. How do they do that? One way is the low pay, the long hours, the poor working conditions they make them work. And of course there are many other ways but you get the idea, there are all kinds of social injustices that go on.

Paul reminds us of what the last days will be like and I think it does fit with what Agur wrote here in Proverbs. In II Timothy 3:1-7 Paul wrote, **“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”**

Paul is speaking of the church, the apostate leaders of the church and if they are doing these things what is the rest of society doing? All you have to do is turn on the news and you can see these things played out every night, these characteristics of our generation!

VERSES 15-16

1. First of all when Agur says **“There are three things that are never satisfied, Four things never say, ‘It is enough’”** is a literary style that is used to produce a sense of climax. That is what Agur is doing here and he will repeat this several times in this chapter.

2. It seems that what Agur was speaking of in the previous verses, the greed of the oppressors, continues on here showing that they are never satisfied. He illustrates this by speaking of a leech that has an endless capacity for sucking blood, it wants more and more, it is never satisfied! It is out of that we see Agur give us 4 examples of things that are never satisfied. They are,

- **THE GRAVE** - There is always a vacancy, death takes no holiday you might say. It reminds me of the Twilight Zone episode where the stewardess says, "Room for one more!" That is the idea here.
- **THE BARREN WOMAN** – She is always hoping for motherhood.
- **THE EARTH IS NOT SATISFIED WITH WATER**- the earth always has room to absorb more water.
- **THE FIRE NEVER SAYS "ENOUGH"** – As much fuel as you put into the fire, it will devour it, it will consume as much fuel as it is fed.

VERSE 17

1. Once again Agur deals with a rebellious child and the consequences of his actions. The fate of the wayward son is that his carcass will be devoured by vultures; he will not be buried in the grave but left for the birds of prey to eat its remains. This was, of course, a disgrace to the Jew to have a body unburied!

VERSES 18-19

1. Once again Agur is making a point and to bring it to the forefront, the climax, he uses that phrase, "**There are three things which are too wonderful for me, Yes, four which I do not understand.**" Let's look at these four things that he does not understand.

2. The wonderful things that are hard to understand deal with the ability of these things to go where no paths have been set before them and they leave no trace behind them.

- ***THE WAY OF AN EAGLE IN THE AIR*** – This is speaking of the marvel of flight. Have you watched an eagle before? He flies through the sky with ease, he is graceful and he makes his own paths and he leaves no trail behind him.
- ***THE WAY OF A SERPENT ON THE ROCK*** – Here is a creature without arms or legs that can move about and move rather quickly. He has no trail to follow and as he goes he leaves no trail behind.
- ***THE WAY OF A SHIP IN THE MIDST OF THE SEA*** – Some feel that this is speaking of a fish and how it has no trails to follow nor does it leave one behind. It could be but I think the ship fits just as well as the fish in this verse.
- ***THE WAY OF A MAN WITH A VIRGIN*** – I guess we can say, “Why do fools fall in love?” There really are no paths to follow in courting someone and there is no trail left behind. It is a mystery and it is wonderful!

VERSE 20

1. What a sad picture of our day. We see here this adulterous woman who is able to do the most heinous sin, destroy lives and it does not bother her. She has reached a point in her life where she can freely sin and not see any wrong in her actions. There is no guilt, no sorrow, no remorse, just rejoicing in her sin. She can do these sexual sins and then say, “So what!”

VERSES 21-23

1. Agur once again says, “**For three things the earth is perturbed, Yes, for four it cannot bear up**” and he is driving home this point once again, this time it is related to insufferable things. The idea being expressed is that of people trembling when inexperienced, unqualified people are placed into positions of power. You are only asking for trouble. Look at what he lists.

- ***A SERVANT WHEN HE REIGNS*** – The idea here is that this man who once served is put into a leadership position and it goes to his head.

- ***A FOOL WHEN HE IS FILLED WITH FOOD*** – Kind of a strange one. I think the idea here is that his prosperity causes him to be more insolent, more disrespectful, more rude than he was before when he had nothing.
- ***A HATEFUL WOMAN WHEN SHE IS MARRIED*** – Do I even need to go down this path? Marriage did not help her disposition and this hatefulness is not only towards her husband but it would seem that it is towards those that are not married. I don't know how she did get married in the first place but now that she is married she is looking down upon those that are not married.
- ***A MAIDSERVANT WHO SUCCEEDS HER MISTRESS*** – The idea here is that she does not know how to behave, how to conduct herself around others now that she has moved up the social ladder you might say.

VERSES 24-28

1. Agur now lists four things that are wise beyond their size. They may be small creatures but there is wisdom in what they do!

- ***THE ANT*** – Think about the wisdom built into these little creatures. They gather food on good days to prepare for the bad days. He takes advantage of his days. In other words, the time to prepare for tomorrow is today! May we be preparing today for what things may come our way tomorrow! How do we do that? We need to be in the Word, we need to be men and women of prayer!
- ***THE ROCK BADGER, HYRAX, CONIES*** – These animals can't protect themselves, they have no natural defenses, so they live in the rocks for protection. For us, we may be feeble creatures but we find protection in ***THE ROCK OF AGES – JESUS CHRIST!***



- ***THE LOCUST*** – This is kind of interesting. We see that the locust have no leader, there is no king leading them and yet they work together as they sweep across the land. We see a co-operative effort being made. As Christians, we do have a King, we do have a leader, Jesus Christ and may we work together with our brothers and sisters in the Lord to bring people into the Kingdom of God!

- **THE SPIDER** – Some translations say “**lizard**” but I think the correct translation is “**spider.**” And think about the size of a spider and he can go where most people can’t go. He can go into the kings palace, the White House, no place is out of his reach. He uses what has been given to him to walk wherever he wants; on walls, ceilings, and like I have said, he can go places he does not deserve to be. As Christians, God does the same with us. He allows us to go places, to be in positions that we would never have dreamed possible, but He gives us the ability, He opens the door and all we must do is walk!

VERSES 29-31

1. Here is the last of these statements, “**There are three things which are majestic in pace, Yes, four which are stately in walk**” and these deal with the majesty God has given to some creatures as they move about. They are graceful, they are beautiful, they are majestic! Let’s look at these.

- **A LION** – I am sure we have all seen the lion move about in the jungle on those National Geographic shows and the majesty as he moves. He roams around like a king and is not intimidated by anyone.
- **A GREYHOUND** – Now we are not sure if this is speaking of a greyhound, a warhorse or even a rooster but I do think the greyhound fits the picture. They are graceful as they move about.
- **A MALE GOAT OR RAM** – I am not a big goat fan but I guess they do strut around at the head of the flock, those wild and crazy male goats!
- **A KING WHOSE TROOPS ARE WITH HIM** – I like this one. As the king moves forward his troops are all around him and there is great majesty in seeing them march by.

VERSES 32-33

1. Agur now concludes with these words and he is basically saying that you should not exalt yourself. You should not devise evil or speak evil, just cover your mouth. Don’t cause wrath, anger to come forth because it will only bring about problems. Very wise words from Agur!

George Williams sums this up like this regarding these verses. He wrote,

If feeble man in his folly has lifted up himself against God, or even indulged hard thoughts of Him, let him listen to the voice of wisdom and lay his hand upon his mouth; for otherwise there will be a result as surely as there is a result when milk is churned, the nose wrung, or anger excited.

- George Williams, *The Student's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, p. 437

PROVERBS 31

VERSE 1

1. We are not sure who King Lemuel is. There was no King Lemuel in Israel so some have speculated that this King was not from Israel, he was not Jewish. I doubt that. I feel that King Lemuel is none other than Solomon himself. Then why does he go by Lemuel?

That is a good question. Many feel that this was a pet name that was given to Solomon by his mother Bathsheba. You see, God called Solomon, "**Jedidiah**" in II Samuel 12:25. His name means, "Beloved of the Lord." Now the name Lemuel means, "Belonging to God" or "Dedicated to God." So if that is true, then these words are the words of his mother Bathsheba. These are words of wisdom, instruction that she is giving to her son. And since these are the words of Bathsheba to her son, it would make sense that Solomon would use a name she would have called him.

When Julie and I were dating she had a pet name or nickname for me, it was and still is “Pudge” even after 34 years of marriage! When I sign cards to her that is how I sign them and her pet name or nickname is “Sunshine.” It is what I have been calling her for 34 years! So I don’t think this is out of the question here with Solomon. In either case, God wrote this for us and I think we all agree on that!

VERSES 2-3

1. So Bathsheba is giving to Solomon these gems of wisdom and the first one has to do with women that will destroy your life. Remember what Solomon said back in Proverbs 6:24-26 as Solomon is warning his son, **“To keep you from the evil woman, From the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, Nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot A man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.”** How many people have been reduced to a crust of bread because they let their flesh overpower their better judgment? And for Kings, well, it is as The Speaker’s Commentary points out for us, “the temptations of the harem were then, as now, the curse of all Eastern kingdoms.”

2. The problem for Solomon is he did not heed the warning from his mother and he let the women he married bring him down. He married 700 wives and had 300 concubines and many were not even from Israel, they were pagan women! We are told in I Kings 11:1-10 of this very thing, **“But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites - from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.’ Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded.”**

You see, it is not just that we know what to do, you then have to apply it to your life, you have to live what God has called you to do! Solomon didn't do this and it affected his relationship with God!

VERSES 4-7

1. The second plea of Bathsheba to her son Lemuel or Solomon is to avoid the use of excessive wine or strong drink. The warning is very simple, drunkenness leads to bad decisions, it clouds the picture, it messes with their memory, it clouds their judgment. They may at times even break the law. Sadly enough, Washington D. C., the capitol of this nation, has the highest alcohol consumption per person in the United States. In the place where big decisions are made, I wonder if their judgment has ever been clouded by drinking!

Now I am not legalistic with this but in the culture we are living in, drinking is a problem in our society. Paul told Timothy in I Timothy 3:3 that an elder is, “**not given to wine.**” Does that mean elders can’t drink? No, they can they just can’t get drunk, which is something for every Christian. For me, I don’t drink alcohol because I don’t want to cause anyone to stumble. “Hey there is Pastor Joe chugging down a brewski” or whatever! For me, it has been some 30 years or so since I had alcohol, not that I can’t, I just choose not to because of the connotations of drinking in our society.

In Isaiah 28:7 we are told, “**But they also have erred through wine, And through intoxicating drink are out of the way; The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, They are swallowed up by wine, They are out of the way through intoxicating drink; They err in vision, they stumble in judgment.**”

Just because society engages in this kind of activity doesn't mean we need too! We should not be a thermometer that just registers the temperature of our society but a thermostat that sets the temperature for a society to live by! We should influence a society for the better and not for the worse! If you want to drink great but I think this is right. It is not for kings, not for princes, not for priests, prophets, or elders. If you want to make an impact in your community, let people see how you live out your faith!

2. Now verses 6 and 7 seem like they are promoting drinking. I think that is exactly what it is saying, but not in a good way. For the person who is heading for Hell, go ahead and drink, not a problem. He is miserable already and drinking is not going to make it much worse!

3. Let me also say this because here in Wisconsin alcohol abuse is a big problem, worse than most states. One of the problems is that people often drink to forget about their problems. The reality is the problems are still there only now the alcohol has compounded them, complicated the situation even more. I have seen this over and over and I have seen it ruin lives, it causes so many problems that it is not worth it. Don't try to cover your problems in a drink, give them to the Lord and He will comfort you. It is as Peter said in I Peter 5:7, "**casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.**"

VERSES 8-9

1. We are to stand up for the poor, the needy, we are to be their voices and in our judgment we should be righteous, not perverted or altered by a bribe. We are to be honest, just, fair in all that we do.

2. Now the next 22 verses deal with a virtuous wife or a woman of character. Also, this does not come across in our English Bibles, but in the Hebrew text each verse begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, it is written as an Acrostic, or like I have said, each verse begins with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Thus, the first verse or really verse 10 of this chapter begins with the Hebrew letter Aleph, then verse 11 with the Hebrew letter Beth, verse 12 the Hebrew letter would be Gimel and-so-on. We see all 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet used here.

Ladies, finally we get to some edifying words for you, Solomon has been pretty rough so far but Bathsheba is going to share with him what a virtuous wife is all about. What I like to do is read through these verses and then I will break them down so you get a clear understanding of what Bathsheba is saying.

VERSES 10-31

1. Here we see several qualities of this virtuous woman or a woman of character. And she is saying that a woman like this can be found, it is not that she is beyond a man's grasp, but that when she is found she should be praised for she is a treasure to any man who finds her.

The first quality that we see here is that she is ***FAITHFUL TO HER HUSBAND*** and we find this in Proverbs 31:11-12. We are told, "**The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.**"

This goes way beyond the obvious, that of sexual sin. She is a woman who encourages her husband, she treats him well, she is a helpmate or is good to him. That is a great quality obviously. He trusts her completely and is an asset in the relationship. When a husband and wife trust each other, there is peace in that relationship. With distrust comes quarrels and fights over situations, a power struggle you might say. She is ***FAITHFUL TO HER HUSBAND***

Next, she is ***DILIGENT IN HER WORK*** and we see this in Proverbs 31:13-19. We are told, **“She seeks wool and flax, And willingly works with her hands. She is like the merchant ships, She brings her food from afar. She also rises while it is yet night, And provides food for her household, And a portion for her maidservants. She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength, And strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good, And her lamp does not go out by night. She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hand holds the spindle.”**

As you have seen in the book of Proverbs and really throughout the Scriptures, God does not bless idleness or laziness. That is not a gift of the Spirit. God wants us to be faithful in the work that we do and as we do that we are honoring Him! Listen to what we are told in Proverbs 31 verses 19 and 27, **“She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hand holds the spindle. . . . She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness.”**

She is not lazy but was busy from the rising of the sun till it's going down. Not because she had to or was forced into this position, but she willingly did these things, they blessed her heart. She travels near and far to get the best deals for her family. My wife is an excellent bargain hunter, she gets great deals on things and as she does this she saves us money and that is a blessing to our family.

She not only gets up before everyone else to cook them breakfast, but she provides a meal for her servants also. She is very industrious, buying a field and planting a vineyard from the profits, besides taking care of her family's needs, which was her first priority. She was so busy watching over her home that she had no time for idleness, which gets people into all kinds of trouble. She is *DILIGENT IN HER WORK*

We see next that she is *KIND IN THE WAY THAT SHE TALKS* and we see that in Proverbs 31:26. We are told, "**She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness.**"

And notice that her speech is according to the Law, not because she has to talk this way, but she loves the Lord and desires to talk like this. Paul said in Colossians 4:6, "**Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.**" That was this woman; she is *KIND IN THE WAY THAT SHE TALKS*.

Also we see that she has *DISCERNMENT IN HOW SHE HANDLES THINGS* and we see that in Proverbs 31 verses 16, 18, 21 and 25. We are told, "**She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard. . . . She perceives that her merchandise is good, And her lamp does not go out by night. . . . She is not afraid of snow for her household, For all her household is clothed with scarlet. . . . Strength and honor are her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come.**"

I think that some men think that women are not smart, that they can't contribute in a marriage relationship. Not true and we see that here. I am so thankful for the wisdom, the discernment of my wife. She understands so many things that have blessed me. Now if I would ignore what she is saying I would be a fool and in a lot more trouble than usual. That truly is a blessing that she has *DISCERNMENT IN HOW SHE HANDLES THINGS*.

Here is one that many don't think of but a virtuous wife is *CAREFUL ABOUT HER APPEARANCE* and we see that in Proverbs 31:22-23, which says, **“She makes tapestry for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land.”**

Sloppiness is not next to godliness. Now she was not wearing designer clothes, but what she had looked nice, she took care of herself. I am not saying that righteousness depends upon the way we look, but we should be careful how we present ourselves. She is *CAREFUL ABOUT HER APPEARANCE*.

We also see that she not only takes the time to care for her family, but she *EXTENDS HER HAND TO THE POOR* and we see that in Proverbs 31:20, **“She extends her hand to the poor, Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.”** Yes she takes care of herself, she takes care of her family, and she is also reaching out to those in need. Paul said in Philippians 2:1-4, **“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”**

Self-will is at the heart of every sin, it caused Lucifer to fall, it caused Adam and Eve to fall, and it remains at the forefront of sin today! We are not going to extend ourselves and reach out to others when there is selfishness. And when Paul speaks of “**conceit**” it is the Greek word KENODOXIA (ken-od-ox-ee’-ah) and it is formed by the adjective KENOS meaning “empty” and the noun DOXA which means, “glory.” Thus, it speaks of empty glory, vain glory; it is thinking too highly of yourself, it is an issue of pride! Thus, like I have said, you are not going to reach out to others when there is conceit in your heart.

Now Paul speaks on the positive side, “**lowliness of mind.**” You see, how do you put away self-will and vain glory? By having humility of the mind and that will then be manifested in your actions. In this position you place others above you, you are a servant of God. You see, as you have a humility of mind, you are going to be watching and helping others more than yourself, it would be impossible then to have strife and contention if that is our hearts focus.

I realize this may seem difficult, it may seem unfair. Some may say, “You don’t know how I’m being treated. How people unfairly treat me. I have to fight for my rights!” Let’s face it, I’m sure we have all felt that way at one time or another or we may even feel that way right now. And Paul goes on to say in Philippians that we need to put on the mind of Christ, we need to look at His example and then we will be able to reach out to others. What a great quality we see in this woman as she ***EXTENDS HER HAND TO THE POOR***

And lastly, and really most importantly, she is ***DEDICATED TO THE LORD*** and we see that in Proverbs 31:30, “**Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.**”

I don't think I can say this strong enough, ***DON'T RUSH INTO MARRIAGE***. And this goes for men and women. Find a godly man or woman or you are going to be in trouble. I don't care how long you are waiting, if you rush into a marriage without the Lord you are going to be in trouble. Everything you thought you were missing you will find you are still missing. Wait upon the Lord for that godly man or woman! As Proverbs 19:14 says, "**... a prudent wife is from the Lord.**"

You see, for this woman, she would not be able to do all those things I have mentioned without the Lord. It is hard enough to do it with the Lord because of the flesh that gets in the way! This is what makes this woman so special; she is ***DEDICATED TO THE LORD***.

The end result of all this is that she is ***COMPLEMENTED BY OTHERS*** as we see in Proverbs 31 verses 28-29 and 31 which says, "**Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all.' ... Give her of the fruit of her hands, And let her own works praise her in the gates.**"

Her children recognize the blessing she is to them. Her husband recognizes the blessings that she is to him. And we see that others see the blessings that this woman is to them! And it is all because she fears the Lord.

You see, true beauty is not seen outwardly, but inwardly. It is the beauty that is seen in a person that knows the Lord, and that inward beauty then flows outwardly in the things in which that person does. The book of Proverbs opened up in verse 7 with the words, "**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge. . . .**" And now it concludes with that same beauty that flows from a person who fears the Lord, that they will be praised, not for their greatness, but for His.

Ladies, the most precious, the most wonderful compliment that you can ever get, sorry men, is from the Lord! But that should not stop us from praising our wife! Listen to what Peter tells us in I Peter 3:3-6, **“Do not let your adornment be merely outward - arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.”**

The main focus ladies is that you build up your spirit, the inner man or inner woman you might say because that is where true beauty is at and it is incorruptible, it will not fade away. And what has taken place in your heart will then overflow in your outward actions, the fruit of the Spirit will flow from you! This is not only precious to the Lord but a blessing to your husband as you live your life obeying the Lord, of manifesting the inner beauty or spiritual virtue. Again, these things our culture does not promote and look at how dissatisfied they are because they are not living in a way that honors God, a way that God says is best for them.

And ladies, do you want to trust in your ability to influence and control your husband or can you trust God and be submissive to your husband? Do you want to trust in your outward adornment, your outward beauty or can you just trust in God and cultivate a gentle and quiet spirit? You see, it all comes down to this, can you trust God and can you be obedient to what He has said? Peter’s point is this and this is not something new but holy women in former times submitted themselves to their husbands and cultivated that inner beauty!

Peter uses the example of Sarah, the wife of Abraham who submitted to his leadership as her husband by being obedient and respecting him by calling him Lord. Now, ladies, I am not saying to call your husband “**lord**,” kind of neat but I don’t think it will fly. The idea is how you talk to him and about him is a reflection that shows if you are honoring him or not. You see, this is a heart attitude, like I have said; true submission is done with joy and not sulking or complaining on how humble you are and the sacrifices you have made. And if you are trusting in the Lord, there is no need to fear, God will honor your obedience. Fear the Lord and walk in obedience to Him! And thus, a godly woman is **COMPLEMENTED BY OTHERS**.

2. Now I have to say that I am so blessed, my wife is such a blessing to me and I hope that I am a blessing to her. Some of you may be thinking, “My wife does not do all those things!” That may be true. If this is an example of a godly woman then where is the example of a godly man? It is Jesus and thus, how are you doing? How are you measuring up? You have a ways to go and if you don’t think you do you are a liar. We are all growing, learning, maturing in the faith and a husband and wife need to work together and it all begins with the basics, **THE FEAR OF THE LORD!**

3. As I close this evening let me leave you and the book of Proverbs with these words.

The virtues of a noble wife are those that are extolled throughout the Book of Proverbs: hard work, wise investments, good use of time, planning ahead, care for others, respect for one’s spouse, ability to share godly values with others, wise counsel, and godly fear (worship, trust, service, obedience).

As Proverbs has stated repeatedly, these are qualities that lead to honor, praise, success, personal dignity and worth, and enjoyment of life. In the face of the adulteress' temptations mentioned often in Proverbs, it is fitting that the book concludes by extolling a virtuous wife. Young men and others can learn from this noble woman. By fearing God, they can live wisely and righteously. That is the message of Proverbs.

- John F. Walvord & Roy B. Zuck, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 973

As Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**" May we live accordingly as we walk in the *FEAR OF THE LORD!*