

Reputation: The Fruit of Your Labor

Getting focused

A profound observation can be made about the identity of wisdom given in the earlier chapters of our study and in the closing lessons of chapter 31. Throughout the book, wisdom is referenced in the feminine gender. “Happy is the man who finds wisdom...for her proceeds are better than silver. All the things you may desire cannot compare to her” (3:13, 15). Now in these final maxims, real life application is made to that of a man who has a virtuous woman as his mate. The description of the virtuous woman will narrate all the qualities of one who has received the instructions of wisdom and is demonstrating them in her life.

Solidify a relationship with wisdom: judge righteously

Read Proverbs 31:1-9

Though our subjects have been broad and filled with many words, when this godly mother speaks she is pointed and direct. The son is admonished in chapter one verse eight to not forget the law of his mother—herein is that law.

- **Avoid immorality** (v. 3). Immorality robs men of strength and destroys their ability to be wise leaders. The ways that destroy kings had been demonstrated by Solomon (1 Kings 11:11). The strength to make personal use of his great wisdom was rendered powerless because of his attraction to those he should have avoided.
- **Avoid intoxicants** (vs. 4-7). The ability to reason and make proper application of God’s word is impossible to those who are inebriated.
- **Be compassionate and merciful** (vs. 8-9).

These three simple yet direct lessons hold the key to living wisely. One cannot receive the wisdom of God unless one willfully rejects immorality and intoxicants. All the blessings

“...it is not for kings to **drink wine**, nor for princes **intoxicating drink**; lest they drink and **forget** the law, and **pervert** the justice of all the afflicted.”

- Proverbs 31:4-5

Memorize and meditate

“Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.”

- Proverbs 31:30

God would so bountifully bestow upon us can be withheld because of being unmerciful. The substance of these three precepts are the things of which pure and undefiled religion consist (James 1:26-27).

The value of the virtuous

Read Proverbs 31:10-31

Our pursuit of wisdom has led us to an individual who is identified as one who possesses all the forms of excellence. Those who possess these qualities are equated with the value given to wisdom itself (3:13-18). Because of this, a trusting relationship is established (v. 11).

As we have previously determined, wisdom does not exist in the absence of practical application and demonstration. The description of the virtuous women exemplifies wisdom.

- Trustworthy (v. 11)
- Diligent (vs. 13-15)
- Perceptive (vs. 16-18)
- Benevolent (v. 20)
- Courageous (v. 21)
- Not self-serving (v. 23)
- Strong and optimistic (v. 25)
- Edifying in speech (v. 26)

One's reputation speaks for itself. As was noted in 27:21b (a man is valued by what others say of him), the possessor of wisdom is adored and praised by those with whom she comes in contact. Though the wise are not self-serving, they shall reap the blessings from their labor.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (1:7). This knowledge must be translated into practical living. This is accomplished when we reverence God and His word by seeking to do His will. He has promised to those who, by faith, ask wisdom of Him—He will provide. “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5). Having this promise of Him, we need only to search our hearts.

Questions to consider

1. What do the three admonitions of vs. 3-9 summarize? _____

2. What do you consider the most notable qualities of the virtuous woman? _____

3. Be prepared to discuss what you consider the most significant benefit you have drawn from your study of the book of Proverbs. _____
