

Session 11

# Finding Honor

*God recognizes those who faithfully demonstrate His wisdom in their lives.*

Proverbs 31:10-16,23-31



**Share about a time when you became aware that someone was watching you.  
How did you respond when you realized they were doing so?**

Most of us go through our days and carry out our tasks without thinking somebody may be watching us. We would be surprised if we found out somebody had been watching us while we go through the day. We would be even more shocked if our observer addressed how we managed our time and the specific challenges we faced.

## UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Chapters 30 and 31 of Proverbs appear to be in contrast but related to each other. The sayings of Proverbs 30 are identified as the sayings of Agur, son of Jakeh (Prov. 30:1). Some scholars have suggested Agur was a nickname for King Solomon. Others have suggested Agur was a close confidante of Solomon, a type of ancient secretary who recorded the sayings of Solomon. Still others have argued that Agur was a man of the Massa tribe located in the northwestern section of Arabia, again a wise sage associated with Solomon's administration. Agur seems to have been an associate of Solomon and influenced by Solomon's wisdom.

Proverbs 31 records the wisdom of King Lemuel (and his mother; 31:1) in clear terms. It is not clear who Lemuel was or where he ruled as a king. Again, what matters is that Lemuel's wisdom is associated with Solomon.

Proverbs 30 and 31 give evidence of Solomon's wisdom in surrounding himself with men of wisdom. What can also be seen in both chapters is the kind of wisdom that leads to nobility, dignity, integrity, and honor. The wisdom of Agur and Lemuel, associates of Solomon, is laid out in clear terms—men and women of God not only understand the wisdom of God, they apply the wisdom of God to daily living.

# PROVERBS 31:10-16,23-31

**10** Who can find a wife of noble character?  
She is far more precious than jewels.

**11** The heart of her husband trusts in her,  
and he **will not lack** **A** anything **good** **B**.

**12** She rewards him with good, not evil,  
all the days of her life.

**13** She selects wool and flax  
and works with willing hands.

**14** She is like the **merchant ships** **C**,  
bringing her food from far away.

**15** She rises while it is still night  
and provides food for her household  
and **portions for her female servants** **D**.

**16** She evaluates a field and buys it;  
she plants a vineyard with her earnings. ...

**23** Her husband is known at the city gates,  
where he sits among the elders of the land.

**24** She makes and sells linen garments;  
she delivers belts to the merchants.

**25** Strength and honor are her clothing,  
and she can laugh at the time to come.

**26** Her mouth speaks wisdom,  
and loving instruction is on her tongue.

**27** She watches over the activities of her household  
and is never idle.

**28** Her children rise up and call her blessed;  
her husband also praises her:

**29** “Many women have done noble deeds,  
but you surpass them all!”

**30** Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting,  
but a woman who **fears the LORD** **E** will be praised.

## Passage Outline

Commitment to Her  
Husband (Prov. 31:10-12)

Wise in Her Work  
(Prov. 31:13-16)

Sure in Her Reputation  
(Prov. 31:23-27)

Honored through Fearing  
God (Prov. 31:28-31)

## Keywords

A. The verb conveys the adequacy of God’s grace in meeting His people’s needs. Here the husband’s abundance from God comes through his God-fearing wife.

B. “Spoil” (KJV). The husband’s gain from his wife’s labors parallels the bounty of the spoils of war.

C. Simile meaning the wife goes wherever she needs to go to gather abundant food for her household

D. Either the wife sees that the servant girls have a fair share of breakfast, or she gives them their assigned tasks for the day.

E. Sons should look for this quality in a wife: “[reverently worshiping, obeying, serving, and trusting Him with awe-filled respect]” (AMP).

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

Lemuel characterized an excellent wife as one who has gained the trust of her husband. This kind of familial and relational trust begins with recognizing the inestimable value of a godly woman. The character of a noble wife enables her husband to trust her with the most intimate details of life. The kind of commitment that should exist between a husband and wife is a matter of the heart. Godly wisdom is a matter of both the mind and the heart, as we have seen previously in Proverbs (see 3:1).

## **How does the keeping of the marriage commitment bring honor to God? To the family?**

We must not devalue the quality and quantity of work required to administer a successful home where everyone flourishes. Lemuel pointed to the savvy and prudence of the wife who wisely provides for her family's needs. The business acumen, entrepreneurial spirit, and wise decision-making of the woman in Proverbs 31 is breathtaking. Lemuel does not picture a woman who dutifully remains quiet and disengaged.

## **What characteristic identified by Lemuel most demonstrates godly wisdom? Explain. How does the portrait of a godly woman painted in this passage compare to how society defines a successful woman today?**

Verses 23-27 emphasize the character of a godly woman. It is this kind of woman who builds up her husband, blesses her children, benefits all with whom she is associated, even benefiting the whole of God's people. Conduct is one thing, but character is quite another. Lemuel's description of a godly woman is grounded in the truth that right conduct comes out of right character.

## **What happens when character is disconnected from conduct, even if the conduct is right?**

Lemuel noted that an excellent wife will be honored in a variety of ways. First, she is honored by *her children*. Second, she is praised by *her husband*. Third, she is honored when others recognize her work as valuable. Fourth, she is honored by the recognition of the nature of true *beauty*. Fifth, she is honored when she is praised because she *fears the LORD*. Finally, she is honored by both private and public recognition of her wise behavior.

## **What are some appropriate ways of honoring women in society?**

**KEY DOCTRINE: Man** The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created humans in His own image, and in that Christ died for humans; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love (Gen. 1:26-30).

# APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers are to honor their marriage commitments.
- Believers are to wisely provide for the needs of their families.
- Believers are to use their influence for the kingdom.
- Believers are to honor God with their lives.

**As a group, discuss ways of encouraging all married couples to live out their marriage vows. What can the group do to help husbands and wives honor God in their marriages?**

**List the needs of your family, including spiritual needs. What actions can you take to help meet the needs you identified?**

**As you go through the week, note people you influence. How are you influencing the people you listed to honor God? What needs to change for you to have a greater influence on others for God's honor?**

## Prayer Requests

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# DAILY EXPLORATION

## Day 1: A wife with noble character is critical to marriage success.

*Read Proverbs 31:10, underlining the phrase “noble character.”*

Lemuel’s question—*Who can find a wife of noble character?*—implied that finding a wife of noble character was a rarity. Further, Lemuel argued that finding a woman of noble character is *far more precious than jewels*. Recognizing the inestimable value of a godly woman is critical to the success of a marriage built on mutual love and respect. Just as a successful, God-glorifying marriage requires the humble, servant leadership of a godly husband, so too it requires the character and commitment of a godly woman.

**BIBLE SKILL: Read, reflect on, and respond emotionally to a Bible verse.** As you read Proverbs 31:10, notice the descriptive details that distinguish a woman of noble character, and spend time reflecting on how those traits would be displayed by a Christian woman who lives in today’s world. Make notes of your reflections. Take the time to “find” the woman in your life who has exhibited in the most complete way the character traits described in the Bible passage. Be sure to thank the Lord for her.

**Consider the women in your life. Who would you describe as being of noble character? Why?**

## Day 2: A godly marriage serves as a strong testimony to the power of God.

*Read Proverbs 31:11-12, identifying the characteristics of a godly marriage.*

The wisdom of God works on the heart to align it with God’s great purposes for the benefit of others. Lemuel explained that a noble wife enriches her husband’s life in more ways than he could ever imagine. Because of her commitment to her marriage and to him, he will not lack anything good. The value of a godly woman is not measured in terms of worldly success but in terms of her godly character. The elevated role God has given to her is to partner with her husband in building a home where all who are associated with that home are blessed, supported, and encouraged. A good and godly marriage serves as a strong testimony to the power of God. The wisdom of God teaches that (1) the most important person in a home ought to be Jesus Christ; (2) the most important earthly relationship in the home is that of the husband and wife; and (3) the most important responsibility in the home is the raising of godly children, if God blesses that home with children. A godly home is a reflection of the person and work of Jesus Christ among His people (Eph. 5:22-33).

**How does the keeping of the marriage commitment bring honor to God? To the family?**



### Day 3: A godly woman is worthy of honor for her work.

**Read Proverbs 31:13-16, considering the work of the woman.**

The productivity of a godly woman is remarkable:

- *She selects wool and flax.* The woman was engaged in the economy as she selected and purchased the commodities and items for her family. She knew what these commodities cost and how they benefited her family.
- *She works with willing hands.* She works willingly, not begrudgingly as if what she is doing for her family must be tolerated and endured so she can get to the really important stuff according to the world.
- *She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from far away.* Lemuel pictured a godly woman as one seeking out the resources necessary for her family.
- A godly woman is not idle or lazy. *She rises while it is still night and provides food for her household and portions for her female servants.* In other words, a Proverbs 31 woman rises early, works hard, and manages other people besides herself.
- Further, she bought and purchased land and commodities and invested in those things that produced food and provided for her family.
- She earned money, wisely investing what she made in things that benefited her family.

**How does the portrait of a godly woman painted in this passage compare to how you define a successful woman today?**

### Day 4: A godly woman is a benefit to her husband.

**Read Proverbs 31:23-27, recognizing characteristics of the wife's character.**

Because of his wife, the husband would be considered one of the wise elders of the city whom everyone respected. A godly woman is a benefit to her husband. As a godly woman, she is known in the marketplace as she *makes and sells linen garments*. She engages in commerce with integrity. The foundation of her behavior is identified in verse 25: *Strength and honor are her clothing*. Rather than being defined by the beauty of her clothing (though she may dress in style) she is clothed with things that never go out of style—strength, honor, and dignity. A godly woman is ready for the future because she has planned for it, and so *she can laugh at the time to come*. Lemuel also recognized that a godly woman was a teacher, speaking wisdom and giving instruction to all within her sphere of influence. Finally, she carefully watched over *the activities of her household*; she was *never idle*.

**How does the excellent wife gain influence and honor in the community?**

## Day 5: God honors the life of a God-fearing woman.

*Read Proverbs 31:28-31, noting how the wife is honored.*

How is such a woman to be honored? Lemuel noted that an excellent wife will be honored in a variety of ways. First, she is honored by her children. Nothing satisfies a mother more than when her children love and appreciate her. Second, she is praised by her husband. A husband honors his wife as he loves, covers, protects, appreciates, and applauds her work. Third, she is honored when others recognize her work as valuable. Fourth, she is honored by the recognition of the nature of true beauty. Physical appearance and good health is valuable, but godliness is better and more lasting. Fifth, she is honored when she is praised because she fears the Lord. If the fear of the Lord is the beginning of true wisdom (Prov. 1:7), then a woman who fears the Lord will not only live wisely but will gain the approval of other wise and godly people. Finally, she is honored by both private and public recognition of her wise behavior. Lemuel was wise enough to know that many people honor all the wrong things. God honors the godly, honorable, and dignified way of living that is exhibited in the life of a God-fearing woman. We are to honor what God honors—a godly woman who fears the Lord.

**What are appropriate ways of honoring women in your life?**



## TALK IT OUT

**Reflect on the truths found in Proverbs 31, sharing with other members of your Bible study group.**

How do these verses describe a healthy marriage commitment?

How can we view the call to provide for others as a good gift?

How do these verses serve as a celebration of the impact of women in society?



For additional context, read “Food Storage and Preservation in the Ancient Near East,” available digitally in the Summer 2020 *Biblical Illustrator for Explore the Bible* at [LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator](http://LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator).