

# Gleanings of Grace

## Proverbs 31

### Lesson 25

Proverbs 31 is a well-known proverb used primarily to encourage wives. However, as you study, be challenged to see this chapter not as a job description for wives. But, rather it is an invitation to celebrate wisdom in action. This chapter was actually written for men to memorize; to call them to sing the praises of the woman in their lives. They could be encouraged to fill in the blanks and proclaim personal appreciation for what she has done with her hands. As women, we not only affect husbands and children. We affect many. We may not often experience someone praising us. But, we certainly can have the objective of hearing those words from our heavenly Father, who takes note of all things.

#### OBSERVATION: Proverbs 31

1. Read Proverbs 31 using the Observation Worksheet (the last page of this homework). After reading through the chapter, what would you say to someone if they asked you what it is about?
2. Key words help us to better understand the verses. We have listed below key words. Mark each one in a distinctive way (either with a symbol, highlighting, or some form of boxing, circling, or underlining). Mark each of the key words each time they are used in the text. Remember to mark any personal pronouns/titles that refer to *King Lemuel* or any *king*, and *wife*.

**Key Words:** *LORD*, *king*, and *wife*

3. The contrasting word *but* is used in verses 29 and 30. Mark the word and record what is being contrasted.
4. This *virtuous* woman is known for doing many things. Scan through verses 10-27 and underline the verbs that describe some of her actions.

List some of the actions that describe this woman's life.

## Background:

1. The key word in the Book of Proverbs is wisdom. Read the first four verses of Proverbs 1 and record King Solomon's goals for writing.
2. King Solomon used the phrase, *my son*, twenty-two times in Proverbs. The last Proverb, chapter 31, also contains the phrase, *my son*. Yet, this proverb was written by a mother. Its purpose is to show *wisdom* in action; what *wisdom* can look like in the life of a woman who *fears the LORD*. Scan the following verses and record some things they reveal about *wisdom*:

Proverbs 1:33

Proverbs 2:10,11

Proverbs 3:13-15

Proverbs 4:11-14

Proverbs 9:1-6

Proverbs 10:23

Proverbs 12:4

- a. Describe your understanding of how a person with *wisdom* behaves.

## Read Proverbs 31:1-9

1. The first nine verses of Proverbs 31 are often ignored. Yet they contain important pieces of *wisdom*, not only for kings and princes, but for anyone who desires to positively influence others. Make a list of the instructions given in these verses.
  - a. The word *strength* in verse 3 has been translated as *virtuous* in Proverbs 31:10 and *done well* in verse 29. It has the sense of resources such as wealth, virtue, valor, strength, or abilities. In what ways can we *give our strength* to other people or things that can be detrimental?

2. The writer of this proverb spent four verses dealing with drinking *intoxicating drinks*. What did she say were the:  
detriments of drinking intoxicating drinks  
  
benefits of drinking intoxicating drinks
  - a. What truths does Isaiah 28:7 provide?
  - b. What did Paul suggest to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:23?
3. Consider the injunctions of Proverbs 31:8,9. A king has a wide range of people he can defend. What are some practical ways we can *open our mouths* to comply with these instructions?

### **Read Proverbs 31:10-22**

1. The author's attention now turns from her son to describing a *virtuous* woman or a woman of valor; a woman who gives her *strength* to activities that are profitable. According to verse 10, how valuable is a *virtuous* woman?
  - a. In what ways is a woman who lives her life well of great value?
2. Verse 11 speaks of her effect on her husband, or to broaden our range, her effect on the important people in her life. What does this verse say about *her husband*?
  - a. Describe a woman that:  
can be *safely trusted*  
  
cannot be *safely trusted*
  - b. What does verse 12 reveal about this woman's relationship to her husband (others)?
    - 1.) Meditate on the following verses and summarize God's calling to choose to do *good*.  
Psalm 37:3,27; Proverbs 13:21; Galatians 6:10

3. Using Proverbs 31:13-22,24, list a few of the deeds of this *virtuous* woman.

a. Modernize these deeds and list some that might be more applicable today.

b. Which deeds do not need to be modernized, as a 21<sup>st</sup> century *virtuous* woman should still be known for them?

4. Note the words *herself* and *her* in verse 22. This woman is a woman who cares for many. Why do you think the king's mother added this verse?

### **Read Proverbs 31:23-27**

1. Proverbs 31:23 brings *her husband* back into the picture. What does it say about him?

a. The *gates* were the place where the men congregated, especially the *elders* or *leaders* of a community. The husband of this woman was able to *sit* amongst his peers having a good reputation. We might assume that his wife had not been talking negatively about him to her peers. Job rehearsed his days of being respected at the *gates* in Job 29:7-11;21-25. Summarize his memories.

1.) This kind of respect is of great value to men. What are some ways to show respect?

2. Proverbs 31:25-27 addresses the *virtuous* woman's attitude and character strengths. List those characteristics.
  - a. These traits do not need to be modernized as they are certainly equally applicable today. Reflect upon the instructions from the following verses as they relate to challenging you to be a *virtuous* woman:

Proverbs 12:18

Proverbs 16:24

1 Peter 3:3,4

### **Read Proverbs 31:28-31**

1. We have read of her actions; we have read of her character. Proverbs 31 closes with the result. What do her *husband* and *children* do (verse 28)? Note: this can be the reaction of many more people in our lives who experience our *virtuous* behavior.

- a. Using verses 29-31, write what they said in your own words.

2. Why is *charm deceitful* and *beauty passing*?

3. Especially note the last phrase of verse 30. This woman undeniably accomplished much. What action resulted in *praise*?

4. Describe a woman who *fears the LORD*.

Personal: What changes in your life need to be made so that you can be that woman?

**REVIEW: Proverbs 31**

1. Describe a *virtuous* woman.

2. In what ways have you been challenged by Proverbs 31?

*The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him,  
In those who hope in His mercy.*

*- Psalm 147:11*

# Observation Worksheet

## Proverbs 31

<sup>1</sup> The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him: <sup>2</sup> What, my son? And what, son of my womb? And what, son of my vows? <sup>3</sup> Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings. <sup>4</sup> It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; <sup>5</sup> lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted. <sup>6</sup> Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart. <sup>7</sup> Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more. <sup>8</sup> Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die. <sup>9</sup> Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy. <sup>10</sup> Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. <sup>11</sup> The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. <sup>12</sup> She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. <sup>13</sup> She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands. <sup>14</sup> She is like the merchant ships, she brings her food from afar. <sup>15</sup> She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants. <sup>16</sup> She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard. <sup>17</sup> She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms. <sup>18</sup> She perceives that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out by night. <sup>19</sup> She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hand holds the spindle. <sup>20</sup> She extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy. <sup>21</sup> She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is clothed with scarlet. <sup>22</sup> She makes tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. <sup>23</sup> Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. <sup>24</sup> She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for the merchants. <sup>25</sup> Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come. <sup>26</sup> She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. <sup>27</sup> She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. <sup>28</sup> Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: <sup>29</sup> "Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all." <sup>30</sup> Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. <sup>31</sup> Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.