

# Proverbs 29-31 • The Wife of Nobel Character

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier  
Life Bible Ministry

You guys up for finishing up Proverbs tonight? Let's do it. Go to Proverbs 29. There's some really good stuff here. So, Proverbs 29. We're going to do our best anyway to finish up these last three chapters.

As you know, as we've been going through the Proverbs, we haven't been reading or studying or looking at every single verse again because of the fact that there's a lot of repetition within the book of Proverbs. So, we've been hitting kind of the highlights here. So, we'll do the same tonight until we get into these last couple of chapters where it's a little bit different.

But Proverbs 29 is very similar to many of the other chapters of Proverbs in that most of the statements that are made here take up just one single verse. I'm going to have you skip down to verse 11 because this is really interesting. What do you think about this? The Proverbs deal with psychology. The Proverbs deal with a lot of things, but even psychology. Check this out, verse 11. It says:

*<sup>11</sup> A fool gives full vent to his spirit,*

*but a wise man quietly holds it back.*

Now, if you have a New American Standard Bible or a New King James, there's a different word rather than “spirit” there. The New American Standard Bible says, “the fool always loses his temper” and the New King James says, “the fool vents all his feelings”; I think the NIV says something like, “the fool gives full vent to his anger.”

Honestly, I think some of those other translations are a little bit clearer, frankly, than the ESV because essentially what we're being told here is that it is foolish for an individual to give full vent to their particularly negative emotions. And the reason for that is really because it's just like anything else in our lives. When we don't apply self-control, we often find ourselves losing control when it comes to our emotions.

I remember as a teenager hearing this idea of there's a positive and a negative way to vent your frustration or your anger. And I remember even being told that it's a good thing – go out in the garage and find a cardboard box when you're angry, and just rip it to shreds, you know? Just give it a good tug and rip into little tiny pieces and then throw it in the trash, and then you'll feel better.

Did you notice here in this proverb though, it doesn't say anything with respect to whether you're venting in a positive or negative way necessarily. It just says the fool gives full vent to that kind of an emotion.

And the reason it is so dangerous is because when you give full vent to something – by the way, we call that in Christian circles “fleshing out” – when you give full vent to something, you find that the next time your emotions well up, you can't control; you're in a little bit less control than you were before because you have exercised a lack of self-control by just giving full vent. And then pretty soon you find that you're actually being dominated by your emotions. We find ourselves literally in bondage to our emotional responses.

Why do you think people get cut off in traffic and they end up doing all kinds of ridiculously stupid things in traffic. We have this thing today that we call road rage. What is that? It's a lack of self-control. That's all that is.

Now, psychologically, we were told, again, I remember this being a very popular psychological sort of a thing to go ahead and give full vent to your anger in a positive way because if you do it with a cardboard box, then you won't do it to someone's face, you see?

Well, that just doesn't follow. You might spend a week or two ripping up boxes in your garage and then somebody gets in your face and you're so accustomed to giving into that rage that it just – boom, there's no self-control. So, what is wisdom? What is wisdom in this case?

Well, he says the wise man holds it back. Now, I want you to understand here that the Bible is not suggesting that you repress your feelings, because we know that's dangerous too. Repressing your emotions is a very dangerous sort of a thing because emotions have this really crazy way of going underground and popping up in places where you least expect them to pop up.

You're at work and there's this little small thing that happens. And normally you'd be able to handle it by just kind of shrugging it off, but then you punch out your boss and you're like, “where did that come from?” Well, that can happen from repressing emotions and not dealing with them.

What the Bible always talks about related to these things is resisting temptation, not repressing. To resist is to acknowledge that it exists, to recognize it, and even to say I'm angry right now, but I'm going to resist the temptation to respond negatively or to do something violent. Because of my emotions, I'm going to resist that temptation. I'm going to call upon the Holy Spirit to give me a cool head to resist the temptation to do what my flesh wants to do.

But you see the difference? There you're dealing with it. You're dealing with your emotion, and you have to deal with your emotions, but giving them full vent is not the smart way to go about that.

Skip down to verse 18. Here's a verse that I've heard quoted many times, and I bet you might have too. It says:

*<sup>18</sup> Where there's no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint,  
but blessed is he who keeps the law.*

This is most often quoted out of the King James, which basically just says, "Where there is no vision or a lack of vision, the people perish." And you'll notice that the ESV says "Where there is no prophetic vision." This is an example of the ESV hitting the nail on the head, because this word in the Hebrew refers to prophetic vision.

What is it saying here? It's basically saying that when people are no longer being influenced by the revelation of God's Word, they cast off restraint. In other words, they begin to live their lives as they see fit, they become their own source of truth, they become their own "small g" god, if you will. It's kind of how the Bible describes the nation of Israel from time to time; "doing what is right in their own eyes."

And that's what this verse is referring to. When there is a lack of revelation from God's Word, prophetic revelation, the people begin to live as if they are their own deity. And if you want to see an example of this, look no further than the United States of America in our present time frame. Because we have cast off the revelation of God.

We've basically started by kicking it out of our schools, we've now kicked it out of our homes, businesses. We don't want to see God's Word anywhere in our culture, in our society. We've cast it away, and now people live as if there's no restraint. And that's the world that we live in. So, welcome to it, huh? But this is

the Proverbs just speaking the truth and telling us why things are the way they are.

Skip down to verse 24. It says:

<sup>24</sup> *The partner of a thief hates his own life;*

*he hears the curse, but discloses nothing.*

The reason I wanted to share this proverb with you is because most people would read this verse and have no clue about what it means. So, I want to kind of explain what it does mean. Because it says here that it's not the thief, but it's the partner of a thief. In other words, his accomplice. It says he hates his own life because he hears the curse. What curse does he hear?

Well, there's a passage back in Leviticus. It's Leviticus – you don't need to turn there, but in Leviticus 5, God's Word says this. It says that if there is ever a call for testimony concerning a crime, that the nation, the people of Israel, are obligated if they have any information about that crime to come forth and bring testimony. They are obligated. They had a moral obligation through the law to step forward and say, “Yeah, I think I can shed some light on that particular crime. I've got some inside information.” And God's Word commanded them to speak up in cases where they had information.

If they refused to speak up in a court type investigation where they had information, but they refused to bring it forward, the Bible says a curse would be on them. They would literally be cursed of the Lord for their lack of willingness to resolve a case when they had inside information.

This proverb says this man, he, remember who he is, he's the partner of the thief, he didn't actually do the stealing, but he's the accomplice of the man who did the stealing. And so, they call for eyewitness testimony or information, and he's got some, and he knows that there is a curse. Because when they make this call, they say, “Bring forth your evidence, cursed is he who holds it back.” And it says, he hears the curse. But he discloses nothing. And why? Because if he brought that information, he would incriminate himself. He would basically be accusing himself and so forth.

It's kind of an interesting proverb, if you will, about getting tangled up with things where you have to live this life of a lie, which is really terrible when you think about it.

Proverbs chapter 30. This is where we kind of get into a different form of the book of Proverbs, these last two chapters. It begins by telling us here in verse 1 that these are “*the words of Agur son of Jakeh.*” It says, “*The oracle.*”

<sup>1</sup> *...The man declares, I am weary, O God, I am weary, O God, and worn out.*

<sup>2</sup> *Surely I am too stupid to be a man.*

*I have not the understanding of a man.*

<sup>3</sup> *I have not learned wisdom,*

*nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.*

In this chapter of the Proverbs, the writer of this, the words of Agur, he begins by declaring to the Lord in as he calls out, cries out to the Lord in prayer, he says, “I know nothing. I totally need wisdom. I'm surely a stupid man because I am absolutely worn out trying to figure things out. I have not learned wisdom. I don't have knowledge” and so forth. And so, he's calling out to the Lord, if you will, and speaking to him about his own lack of understanding.

And then we begin to see some interesting questions. He says:

<sup>4</sup> *Who has ascended to heaven and come down?*

Who has that kind of insight and information? Who has gone up into the heavenlies and has come down to instruct the rest of us? Well, of course, from our New Testament perspective, we say Jesus did, right? But that's not in his Old Testament understanding of things, at least at this point.

He says:

*...Who has gathered the wind in his fists?*

*Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment?*

*Who has established all the ends of the earth?*

*What is his name? And what is his son's name?*

*Surely you know!*

Pretty interesting, isn't it? verse 5:

<sup>5</sup> *Every Word of God proves true;*

*he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.*

<sup>6</sup> *Do not add to his words;*

*lest he rebuke you, and you be found a liar.*

Boy, isn't that good advice? Don't add to his words. And obviously the same would be true about subtracting from his words. Don't do that, lest he rebuke you, and you be found out to be a liar.

I love this next section here, verses 7-9. He says:

<sup>7</sup> *Two things I ask of you;*

*deny them not to me before I die:*

First, he says:

<sup>8</sup> *Remove far from me falsehood and lying.* That's the first thing. And then next:

*...give me neither poverty nor riches;*

*feed me with the food that is needful for me,*

<sup>9</sup> *lest I be full and deny you*

*and say, "Who is (God)?"*

*or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.*

Isn't that an interesting prayer? So, he's like, "Lord, I've got two requests. First of all, I don't want to be a man who's full of falsehood. I don't want to be a man who has to put up walls and doesn't tell the truth."

Have you ever noticed how easy it is not to tell the truth sometimes? And we justify it in all kinds of different ways. I remember as a kid, telling lies to keep myself out of trouble I mean, I think we've all done it as children; "I didn't hit

him,” even though I'm holding the bat and he's got blood streaming down his head. “I didn't do it” sort of a thing.

You ever notice how kids will do that? Just to save your bacon sort of a thing. We recognize falsehood in our lives from a very early time, and you can tell that this man is truly troubled by the recognition and the acknowledgement that “I don't like this. This is gross.” So, he says, “Lord, please just remove this whole idea of falsehood and lying from my life.”

And then next he asks for a prayer of balance related to the things that he's given in this life. He says “Lord, I certainly don't want to be poor, but I don't want to be rich either.” So, he says, “do me a favor and don't give me poverty but don't give me riches either, just feed me with what is needful. I'll take just what I need.”

He says, “Because you know, if I have too much, I might become so satisfied with what I have that I eventually come to the place of saying I don't need God anymore.” And that's what resources that we have at our disposal do to us, don't they?

And that doesn't mean we're an atheist necessarily. It just means that our lives are kind of being played out in an atheistic sort of a way, which Christians can do by the way; it's called “practical atheism”. You can be an absolute believer in Jesus Christ and be a practical atheist. What that means is as you live your life, you live it as if God doesn't exist.

You make decisions without praying. You get married without consulting the Bible about if this is the person you should marry. You spend your money as if it's yours to spend, and all of your resources are yours to use as you see fit. You make decisions about business and where you're going to live completely on your own and that's called “practical atheism.”

He's kind of saying, if I'm so full of the things of this world, I may get to the point where I live in such a way where I go, “God?” What does the Bible tell us to do? It tells us earlier in the Proverbs where we were told to acknowledge the Lord in all of our ways; to acknowledge Him in every aspect of life, everything. Health, sickness, poverty, riches. Good, bad relationships, pain, joy, sorrow, happiness. Acknowledge the Lord in all of your ways.

What this person is saying in this proverb is, “I don't ever want to get to the place where I refuse to acknowledge You. I no longer acknowledge You in

these areas of my life because I'm so satisfied with what I've been given that I've forgotten to look to You.”

He says also, “I want to be careful that I don't ever become so poor that I'm actually tempted to steal. And then what do I end up doing? I end up profaning the name of my God.” In other words, people know that I'm a believer. People know that I love the Lord. People know that I have put my hope in You. And then all of a sudden, I'm on the front page of the local newspaper saying that I got caught for robbing a store or breaking into somebody's house because I was hungry. He says, “Lord, give me neither poverty nor riches.” I think that's kind of a beautiful prayer, actually.

Skip down to verse 11. He says:

*<sup>11</sup> There are those who curse their fathers*

*and do not bless their mothers.*

*<sup>12</sup> There are those who are clean in their own eyes.*

*but they're not washed of their filth.*

*<sup>13</sup> There are those – how lofty are their eyes,*

*how high their eyelids lift! which is a sign of pride and arrogance.*

*<sup>14</sup> There are those whose teeth are swords,*

*whose fangs are knives, and they use those things*

*to devour the poor from off the earth,*

*the needy from among mankind.*

*<sup>15</sup> The leech has two daughters,*

*Give and Give.* Wasn't even creative enough to give them a separate name. This is my one daughter, Give and my other daughter, Give. The leech; the one who leeches on. It says:

*Three things are never satisfied;*



*four never say, "Enough.":*

<sup>16</sup> *Sheol*, which is the grave. Have you ever noticed that the grave never has enough? The grave never gets enough. It keeps grabbing people, doesn't it?

*the barren womb,*

*the land never satisfied with water*, which is kind of to say the desert,

*and a fire that never says "Enough."*

Wow. Verse 18. Remember, these are observations.

<sup>18</sup> *Three things are too wonderful for me;*

*four, I do not understand:*

<sup>19</sup> *The way of an eagle in the sky*, it's amazing.

*the way of a serpent on a rock,*

You ever seen a serpent slither on a rock? You know, what would cause you and I to twist an ankle?

*the way of a ship on the high seas,*

*and the way of a man with a virgin.*

Again, observations. He says, I think about these things and I think, wow. Verse 21, this is interesting:

<sup>21</sup> *Under three things, the earth trembles;*

*under four, it cannot bear up:*

<sup>22</sup> *a slave when he becomes a king,*

*and a fool when he is filled with food;*

<sup>23</sup> *an unloved woman when she gets a husband,*

*and a maidservant when she displaces her mistress.*

And when it says that the earth trembles and that it cannot bear up under those things, it's basically describing an unbearable situation. In other words, he's saying these things are unbearable, they're just unbearable.

You'll notice that one of them is an unloved woman when she gets a husband. In other words, a married woman who is unloved. It is considered to be an unbearable situation for a woman. Why? Because God created the woman to be loved.

What's the number one thing that God's Word says to the husband? "Husbands, love your wives." It doesn't say love her if she's lovely. Doesn't say love her if she's lovable. It doesn't say love her if you feel like it. Love her if you're having a good day. Love her if she's been nice to you. No, it just says, "Husbands, love your wives." In other words, be loving to your wives. Why? God created her with a need. And it's unbearable if she's married and feels unloved.

And by the way, sometimes she feels unloved even when she is loved. A woman can feel unloved even when she is loved. And she feels that because that is her perception. And it's up to a husband to deal with her perception.

I think some husbands can get really frustrated when their wife comes up to them and says, "I just don't feel like you love me." And he's like, "Honey, I love you, okay, get over it," right? No, we have to deal with her perception. We have to. Her perception is she's not loved. You can sit and argue all day long and tell her that she's wrong, but what good is that going to do? You've got to deal with their perception. "I don't feel like you love me." Well let's deal with that. And you scratch that surface and get down a little ways and you probably find out what's going on there.

Verse 24:

<sup>24</sup> Four things on earth are small,

*but they are exceedingly wise: First of all*

<sup>25</sup> *the ants are a people not strong,*

*yet they provide their food in the summer;*

Ants are really incredible. Have you ever taken the time to sit and just watch an ant or a group of ants work? I mean, usually we think, “oh, ants, let's get an ant trap.” But I remember as a kid sitting for hours and watching ants. I mean, they're just amazing, what they can do and how strong they are in the sense of how much they can lift.

Verse 26:

<sup>26</sup> *the rock badgers are a people not mighty,*

*yet they make their homes in the cliffs;* literally in the rocks.

Verse 27:

<sup>27</sup> *the locusts have no king,*

*yet all of them march in rank;*

And then verse 28:

<sup>28</sup> *the lizard, you can take it in your hands,*

*and yet it is in kings' palaces.* So interesting, isn't it?

Verse 29:

<sup>29</sup> *Three things are stately in their tread;*

*four are stately in their stride:*

<sup>30</sup> *the lion, which is mightiest among the beasts*

*and does not turn back before any;*

<sup>31</sup> *the strutting rooster, the he-goat,*

*and a king whose army is with him.* Yes, indeed.

Chapter 31. This is the final chapter of Proverbs and it begins by saying these are:

<sup>1</sup> *The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him:*

Now here's the deal you guys, we don't honestly know who King Lemuel is. There is Jewish legend that identifies Lemuel as Solomon. And the advice that he gives here as given from his mother, who was Bathsheba. But there's no evidence for this legend, although some teachers actually teach that King Lemuel is another name for Solomon, but we don't know that for sure. All we know is that Lemuel means “dedicated to God” or “belonging to God.” Whoever he was, the wise counsel of his mother is preserved here.

And it begins in verse 2 by saying:

<sup>2</sup> *What are you doing, my son? What are you doing, son of my womb?*

<sup>3</sup> *What are you doing, son of my vows.*

Verse 3. And she begins by giving him some warnings. She says:

<sup>3</sup> *Do not give your strength to women,*

*your ways to those who destroy kings.*

The first warning that Lemuel's mother gives him is not to spend his strength on sensual pursuits. And when he says, or when she says I guess I should say, “don't give your strength to women,” the idea here in this proverb is not to make women sound like they're the bad person. Rather, this is a mother counseling her son against living a life of only pursuing women and doing it to satisfy his fleshly desires.

It's a mother saying, “don't make your life all about pursuing sensual pleasure.” Because ultimately, that is going to just while away – you're going to give away your strength and you will be ultimately destroyed. Now, in the case of Solomon, that was in fact the case. So, there is that connection there.

Verse 4, next warning:

<sup>4</sup> *It is not for kings, O Lemuel,*

*it is not for kings to drink wine,*

*or for rulers to take strong drink,*

*<sup>5</sup> lest they drink and forget what has been decreed*

*and pervert the rights of the afflicted.*

*<sup>6</sup> Give strong drink to the one who is perishing,*

*and wine to those in bitter distress.*

*<sup>7</sup> let them drink and forget their poverty*

*and remember their misery no more.*

This next exhortation to Lemuel from his mother is to stay away from alcohol. Now, you have to remember something about the king, and we assume that this was a king of Israel, although we don't know.

The thing about the kings is that they didn't just sit around on a throne all day and eat grapes and count their gold. They were involved every single day in justice. The kings would hear cases. People would come to them with their disputes. They were the court of the land, and they would hear people's disputes and they would make decisions.

You'll remember that Solomon was famous for making the decision he did about the two women who each had a baby living in the same house. One of them laid on her baby and suffocated it during the night. And then while her friend was sleeping, took her dead baby and put it with her friend, took the live baby and put it in her bed. And then of course the other woman woke up and realized, "Well this isn't my baby." And the gal who laid on her baby said, "Yes, it is." So, they literally brought that case before Solomon.

I mean, how would you like to decide that kind of a case? Whose baby is this? You're not living in the days of DNA where we can say, "Well, open up. Let's get a swab here" and just kind of see what's going on. Can't do that, right? So you'll remember what a great case Solomon appealed to motherly instinct of preservation. He says, "Alright, fine. If we can't figure out whose baby it is, bring me a sword. We'll cut it in half and give each woman part of it."

And of course, the mother out of great compassion for her child said "No, give it to her. It's fine." And Solomon said, "Give the baby to that woman, that's the mother."

Well, it was great wisdom. But see, this is the kind of stuff the kings did. They had to be on their game or there were going to be problems, or justice would not be served. And so, the mother of Lemuel tells him here, “Don't give yourself to alcoholic drink, lest you pervert the right ways of the afflicted.” In other words, lest your judgment be skewed by chemical imbalance of drink and that sort of thing. It's a really smart piece of advice. And it's true; if you want to think straight, don't put those kinds of things in your body. Just don't do it.

Verse 8. Here's she goes on exhorting him:

<sup>8</sup> *Open your mouth for the mute,*

In other words, speak for those who can't speak.

*for the rights of all who are destitute.*

And the word destitute means they have nothing. It's not that they just are poor, they have nothing. She says:

<sup>9</sup> *Open your mouth, judge righteously,*

Again, that's what the king did.

*defend the rights of the poor and the needy.*

She speaks to him of being a godly, just king. And these are great exhortations.

Now, in the final grouping of verses that we look at here tonight that complete our study of the book of Proverbs, beginning here in verse 10 and through the end of the chapter, we have a description of a strong and godly woman that is being elevated for you and I here in the scriptures.

And it's worth noting here that this section is in the original Hebrew, an acrostic poem. And what that means is every single verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet in an acrostic form. And this was frankly a common form of writing among the Hebrews, and it's found often in the Psalms, and even in the book of Lamentations which as you probably know was written by Jeremiah.

Another point about this last section of Proverbs is that I take an entire evening when I'm doing pre-marriage counseling to talk about the role of the woman in

marriage, and we read this section in Proverbs. And it's always a little daunting for a woman to hear this, I'll be honest with you. Because the way the scripture speaks of the woman in this passage is quite exalted.

And I even had a woman, many years ago, when I started using this passage say to me, after we finished reading it, she was like, "I can't do any of this." And she felt like it was kind of a burden that was being placed upon her by the scripture to kind of attain to some glorious level of womanhood. I mean, you could call this section of scripture Superwoman.

But I want women to know, as we go in and look at this, that the purpose – I don't believe the purpose of this section is to make a woman feel as if this is absolutely some high standard that you must achieve or you're kind of a dirty rotten dog. I rather think what's happening here, or what's being given to us here, is an elevation of women in general.

There's a lot of people who believe that the Bible speaks rather despairing disparagingly of women in the sense of they can't do anything. Well, not according to this passage. This woman is incredible, and the things that she does are amazing and seem, I think, probably to some people, contrary to what you might think the Bible would say about a woman.

And that's what I want women to see in this. I want women to understand that you are free to be all that God created you to be. That's what I want women to see. I believe that's what the scripture is trying to convey. It's like, ladies, God created you with wonderful gifts, wonderful abilities. Be who God created you to be. Let those gifts shine. Use them. Bless your family. Bless those who you love and use your giftings to the best of your ability.

Verse 10, let's begin here. It starts with a rhetorical question that asks:

<sup>10</sup> *An excellent wife who can find?*

And the word *excellent* here is used not in the sense of beautiful. It's used in the sense of frugal and faithful. Frugal and faithful. And the question that's being asked when it says, "Who can find such a woman?", it's not meant to convey that such a woman is impossible to find. It's basically just saying that she is the kind of woman that men would want to look for. And even if he had to search for a long time, this is the one; this is the kind of a woman, guys, that you want to look for.

And it kind of goes on – she's dependable. We're going to find out that she's pretty crazy amazing, and that's why it goes on to say here at the end of verse 10:

*She's far more precious than jewels.*

A lot of men spend their lives running after money when they should be looking for a good woman to be by their side for all of their lives. Verse 11:

<sup>11</sup> *The heart of her husband trusts in her,*

*and he will have no lack of gain.*

<sup>12</sup> *She does him good, and not harm,*

*all the days of her life.*

And this is the kind of woman that a man sees as a true partner in life, a partner, right? And I think you know what I mean by that. It talks here about the fact that he trusts her completely. He trusts her. He knows that it is her heart to bless him and to bless the family. That's her heart. Her heart is not just to live for herself; she is serving, loving, caring for her family. He has no doubt about that at all.

Verse 13 gets into some of the specifics. It says:

<sup>13</sup> *She seeks wool and flax,*

*and works with willing hands.*

Obviously, those were some of the things women did back then. It says:

<sup>14</sup> *She's like the ships of the merchant;*

*she brings her food from afar.*

<sup>15</sup> *She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household*

*and portions for her maidens.*



And that idea of maidens could also be considered like employees. Notice they're her maidens; these are women who assist her. Let's even imagine that she has a business because this woman does. This woman is an entrepreneur. She has a business, she sells things, and she makes good money, and she even invests that money.

You still got that weird picture that the Bible says that women are supposed to do nothing and sit around and just be barefoot and pregnant? See, that's not what's going on here. It says here, she even provides for her portions for her maidens, or her employees.

Look at verse 16. It says:

*<sup>16</sup> She considers a field and buys it;*

*with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.*

Furthermore, this woman is industrious. She is making business investments with her own income. She considers, it says here, a field and then decides, yeah, I'm going to purchase that field. That's good. And then with her own ability and her income, she turns it into a vineyard.

Verse 17 says *<sup>17</sup> She dresses*, your Bible may say “girds”, *herself with strength and makes her arms strong.*

And that speaks of her willingness to tackle even challenging circumstances; difficult things. Verse 18:

*<sup>18</sup> She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.* In other words, her business is doing good, and:

*Her lamp does not go out at night.* That doesn't mean she stays up all night long. It just means there's a diligence and a hard work to her business ethic, and she works hard. Verse 19 says:

*<sup>19</sup> She puts her hand to the distaff,*

*and her hand holds the spindle.*

Those are, of course, are parts of the loom and stuff like that by which they would make garments and pieces of clothing. But it says in verse 20 that she also takes time to:

<sup>20</sup> *...open(s) her hands to the poor*

*and reaches out her hands to the needy.*

Even with all of her business responsibilities, the things that she's doing for her family, she still takes time to reach out to those who have less than she does. So, neighbor gets sick and can't take care of the kids or can't make meals. So, she's helping out or whatever. Verse 21 says:

<sup>21</sup> *She's not afraid of snow for her household* for her household, for her family,

*for all of her household are clothed in scarlet.* In other words, she has prepared for the days to come.

Verse 22 says:

<sup>22</sup> *She makes bed coverings for herself;*

*her clothing is fine linen and purple.* And check this out:

<sup>23</sup> *Her husband is known in the gates*

*when he sits among the elders of the land.* Why is that statement there?

Why would it sit there? Why would it sit be talking to us about this woman, and then say something about the man? Oh, by the way, her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders. The inference here, the context is about her. In other words, he is known and respected at the city gate because of his wife; because of her industrious attitude, her hard work, her faithful diligence. So, he's literally respected. The men kind of look at him and go, “yeah, boy, she's incredible.”

Verse 24, we find out what she does in her business:

<sup>24</sup> *She makes linen garments and sells them;*

*she delivers sashes to the merchant.*

<sup>25</sup> *Strength and dignity are her clothing,*

*and she laughs at the time to come.* Because she's prepared.

<sup>26</sup> *She opens her mouth with wisdom,*

*and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.*

<sup>27</sup> *She looks well to the ways of her household*

*and does not eat the bread of idleness.*

I've always loved verse 27. It says “*she looks well to the ways of her household.*” I think it's the NIV that says she basically kind of governs the affairs of her family, her household. That she's in that position.

I've known men who will not allow their wives to kind of run the household. I think women should do that. I really do. I mean, I've known men who won't let their wives paint house inside colors unless they get the man's approval. I'm like, guys, just chill out. Let her run the house. Let her run the household. Let her paint it the way she wants to paint it. Let her nest, let her do it, you know?

She looks to the needs of her household. She looks well to the ways of her household. Does not eat the bread of idleness, there as it ends in verse 27. She's not sitting around watching soap operas all day. And then verse 28. This is the result:

<sup>28</sup> *Her children rise up and call her blessed;*

And you know what's cool is that I have seen many excellent women who have had this happen to them. I've seen many excellent women whose children have risen up in their adult years and declared their mother to be blessed because she was a Proverbs 31 woman, and was devoted to her family and faithful, hardworking.

*her husband also, and he praises her:* Here's what he says in verse 29:

<sup>29</sup> “*Many women have done excellently,*

*but he says, baby, you surpassed them all.*”

That's a good thing, by the way, for a husband to say to his wife. Guys, just take a cue. Yeah, lots of women have done some pretty cool things, but you roar ahead of all of them.

<sup>30</sup> *Charm is deceitful, and it is, and beauty is vain,*

I don't like that translation, I'll be honest with you, here in the ESV, because the word vain literally means “vapor” or “breath,” and I rather like the way the NIV and some of the others have rendered this, which is “beauty is fleeting.” Beauty is like a vapor. That's what it's basically trying to say. So, those sorts of things that our culture wants to hang onto just as long as possible. Here's what is really important:

*...a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*

That's God's perspective, right? Whereas we think, “Oh, she's charming. Oh, she's lovely.” What does God care about? The fear of the Lord; “*A woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*”

Verse 31:

<sup>31</sup> *Give her the fruit of her hands,*

In other words, give her what she deserves. Give her what she deserves. She's earned a right to be honored and respected for who she is and what she's done and all that she has accomplished.

<sup>31</sup> *Give her the fruit of her hands,*

*and let her works praise her in the gates.*

In other words, among the people. The gates is a picture of where people would gather to do business and to make decisions in the city and so forth. So let her works bring her praise in the eyes of the people.

It's a great passage, isn't it? It's a great reminder that women are important in God's economy. God didn't make women to be slaves; to just sit around and do nothing. Wonderful, glorious gifts that He has given to the female side of things. And women need to know that they are free to be all that God has made them to be.