

The Bible Jesus Used

A Gospel-Centered Glance at
the Old Testament

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Proverbs at a Glance

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Epilogue (31:10–31)

❖ Introduction:

- ❖ Wisdom personified (chs. 1–9); wisdom embodied (31:10–11)
- ❖ Alphabetic acrostic (22 lines)
- ❖ Stair-stepped (or chiastic) structure

Structure of Proverbs 31:10-31

- A: High value of a good wife (v. 10)
- B: Husband benefited by wife (vv. 11–12)
- C: Wife worked hard (vv. 13–19)
- D: Wife gave to poor (v. 20)
- E: Wife had no fear of snow (v. 21a)
- F: Children were clothed in scarlet (v. 21b)
- G: Coverings for bed, wife wore linen (v. 22)
- H: Public respect for husband (v. 23)
- G': Sold garments and sashes (v. 24)
- F': Wife was clothed in dignity (v. 25a)
- E': Wife had no fear of future (v. 25b)
- D': Wife spoke wisdom (v. 26)
- C': Wife worked hard (v. 27)
- B': Husband and children praised wife (vv. 28–29)
- A': High value of a good wife (vv. 30–31)

(Adapted from Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs–Ecclesiastes*, 248)

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❖ Interpretation:

- ❖ **The time expressed by the verbs.** Verb forms normally translated as past are rendered as present. Minus the intro (v. 10) and conclusion (vv. 30–31):
 - ❖ **19 *qatal*** (usually simple past)
 - ❖ **9 *wayyiqtol*** (always simple past)
 - ❖ **5 *yiqtol*** (usually present or future, but can be habitual past)

Prov 31:10–31

10 An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.

11 The heart of her husband trusted in her, and he **had no lack of** gain. 12 She did him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. 13 She sought wool and flax, and worked with willing hands. 14 She was like the ships of the merchant; she **would bring** her food from afar. 15 She rose while it was yet night and provided food for her household and portions for her maidens. 16 She considered a field and bought it; with the fruit of her hands she planted a vineyard. 17 She dressed herself with strength and made her arms strong. 18 She perceived that her merchandise was profitable. Her lamp **did not go out** at night. 19 She put her hands to the distaff, and her hands held the spindle. 20 She opened her hand to the poor and reached out her hands to the needy. 21 She **was not afraid** of snow for her household, for all her household were clothed in scarlet. 22 She made bed coverings for herself; her clothing was fine linen and purple.

23 Her husband was/is known in the gates in his sitting among the elders of the land.

24 She **made** linen garments and **sold** them; she **delivered** sashes to the merchant. 25 Strength and dignity **were** her clothing, and she **laughed** at the time to come. 26 She **opened** her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness **was** on her tongue. 27 She **looked** well to the ways of her household and **did not eat** the bread of idleness. 28 Her children **rose** up and **called** her blessed; her husband also, and he **praised** her: 29 “Many women have done excellently, but you **have surpassed** them all.”

30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD—**she** is to be praised. 31 Give her of the fruit of her hands, **so that her works may praise** her in the gates.

❖ **Implications:**

(Taken from Brian L. Webster, “The Perfect Verb and the Perfect Woman in Proverbs,” 271.)

- ❖ **Instead of what she does, the description says what she did and what she used to do.**
- ❖ **We are not talking about a prospective spouse for a young bachelor or even a young wife. Rather, this passage is about a mature women whose character and labors have benefited her husband and children.**

- ❖ **The behaviors are typical, not constant and simultaneous:**
 - ❖ She did not necessarily stay up late and rise early every day, but she did what was necessary for the benefit of the family.
 - ❖ She did not necessarily have ongoing concurrent business in real estate, farming, tanning, and textiles, but over the years she has done such things.
- ❖ **This is a lifetime achievement recognition, not her daily planner.**

- ❖ **The shift away from present-tense translation removes possible overtones of workaholism and adds the quality of persevering faithfulness.**
- ❖ **She is still ideal. She has demonstrated that beauty is vain by having lived out what is important. She fears God, speaks with wisdom, is industrious, valuable, valiant.**
- ❖ **But she is perhaps a bit more human, a bit more possible to imitate. When the verbs are translated as past, the perfect woman is a bit more possible to find in the present.**

Christ, Our Wisdom

- ❖ **Israel's redemptive hope:** a royal son, a man of the torah who fears God and walks in his ways.
- ❖ Deut. 17:18–20. And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests.¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them,²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

Christ, Our Wisdom

- ❖ **Israel's redemptive hope:** a royal son, a man of the torah who fears God and walks in his ways.
- ❖ **Proverbs as kingdom hope.** In calling all to engage in the pursuit of wisdom, Proverbs portrays the model Israelite and heightens hope in the ultimate wise king.

❖ Christ's wisdom was shown in his teaching and proven in his deeds.

- ❖ Matt. 11:2, 19. Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples. . . .¹⁹ [Jesus said,] “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”
- ❖ Matt. 13:54. And coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?”

❖ **Christ's wisdom was greater than Solomon's.**

- ❖ Matt. 12:42. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

❖ **The gospel is “the wisdom of God.”**

- ❖ 1 Cor. 2:7–8. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

❖ **Christ is the wisdom of God for us.**

- ❖ 1 Cor. 1:22–24, 30. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. . . .
³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

- ❖ **Christ and wisdom are united in the way they display and point to God.**
- ❖ **“The image of the invisible God”**
- ❖ **“The firstborn of all creation”**
- ❖ **“The beginning”**
- ❖ **The dwelling place of “all the fullness of God”**
- ❖ **The mediator of and master workman over the creation.**

Prov. 8:22–31. Yahweh possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. ²³ Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. ²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. ²⁵ Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth, ²⁶ before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. ²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, ²⁸ when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, ²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, ³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, ³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.

Col. 1:15–19. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

❖ **Christ's exaltation over all things demands the same homage that wisdom itself commands.**

Prov. 8:32–36. And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways. ³³ Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. ³⁴ Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. ³⁵ For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from Yahweh, ³⁶ but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death.

Phil. 2:5–11. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.