

(Proverbs) ch.30:9 - 31:31

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon explores the humility of Agur in Proverbs, emphasizing the importance of contentment, the dangers of pride, and the wisdom found in small creatures.

Duration: 1:00:49

Scripture: Proverbs 30:21-23, Proverbs 31:19-21, Matthew 6:33, Romans 14:4

Topics: "Humility", "Pride"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses various types of people who receive what they don't deserve. He emphasizes the importance of remaining humble and not forgetting one's past condition when experiencing God's goodness. The speaker then contrasts these undeserving individuals with four small but remarkable creatures, such as ants and badgers, who exhibit wisdom and resourcefulness. The sermon also touches on the manifestation of pride in a person's appearance and warns against taking advantage of those who are weaker.

Transcript

In chapter 30, we saw that this chapter was written by a man called Agur, verse 1. We don't know anything about him, except that he was the son of Jaiké, as it says there in that verse. But we also see, saw something about his humility in verse 2. He says, Surely I am more stupid than any man. In verse 3, I have not learned wisdom, but I have knowledge of the Holy One.

Here was a man who was below average intelligence, as far as worldly things were concerned. But he says in verse 3, But I have knowledge of God. And it's not surprising that he got a knowledge of God, because he was humble enough to acknowledge his own ignorance and stupidity.

He says, I am more stupid than any man. And I thought of that verse. Who can we say is more stupid than any man in the earth? About whom can we say that? That there is a certain category of people who know nothing to babies.

Babies know nothing. They know nothing which even six-month-old children know. Then we understand what Jesus meant when he said, I thank you Father, Matthew 11, 25, that you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent, and you have revealed them, not to children, but to babes.

Babes means the really newborn ones, who know nothing. And it's very difficult to come to that place. And that's why many believers do not receive revelation.

It's become crystal clear to me anyway, that the reason why many people do not get revelation is one, and only one reason. They are not babes in their own thinking. They do not acknowledge that they are more stupid than any man.

If they came to that place, they would be able to say, I don't have wisdom, but I have knowledge of the Holy One. Now we are looking at verse 9, and we can continue there. He prays in verse 8, give me neither poverty nor riches, that's the second prayer.

Feed me with the food that is my portion. That means just like Jesus taught us to pray, give us this day our daily bread, not more than what we need. And we also compared that with the statement of Paul in Philippians 4, where he says, I have learned to be content, and I know how to handle poverty and prosperity.

But there are very few people who have reached the level of the Apostle Paul, so until we reach there, it's good for us to pray that God will keep us particularly from getting too wealthy, lest we don't sense our need of Him. Till we come to the place where we have grace to be able to know how to handle that wealth properly. It's not something we can easily say that we live in the New Covenant age, so we don't live in Proverbs 30, we live in Philippians 4. Not necessarily, Philippians 4 is not a matter of time, it's a matter of experience.

Even though we live in 1985, a lot of people are still living in the Old Testament in experience. So we shouldn't be so quick to jump to Philippians 4, if we have not come to that same attitude to money that Paul had. We can't say, I know how to handle prosperity, unless we have the same attitude to money that Paul had.

A total freedom from the love of money. If we are not totally free from the love of money, we can't say that we know how to handle prosperity. We don't know it.

We need to ask God for much grace that we don't drift away from Him through wealth. Now we turn to verse 10. Do not slander a slave to his master, lest he curse you and you be found guilty.

That has an application for our ordinary situation. It basically means, don't be a busybody in other people's matters. Don't complain about someone else's servant to his master.

And that also applies spiritually when it says in the Word of God in Romans 14 and verse 4, who are you to judge another man's servant? When we seek to judge another believer, the Word of God says, who are you to judge another man's servant? Don't be a busybody in other people's matters, because it says, lest he curse you and you be found guilty. How can we be found guilty? Because we may be giving an opinion without proper understanding of all the facts. We go and complain about someone to someone else, and then when we hear all the facts, we discover that we ourselves were foolish to make such a complaint, because we gave our opinion before we knew all the facts.

Verse 11 to 14 describes four kinds of people. First is the kind of man who curses his father and does not bless his mother. That is an ungrateful man, one who is ungrateful to his parents for all that his parents have done for him.

And notice here, there is a sin of commission and a sin of omission. It says in verse 11 in the Good News Bible, there are people who curse their fathers and do not show their appreciation for their mothers. The sin we commit is to curse the father.

And the sin of omission, there are two types of sin, what we commit and what we don't do, which we should do. That's the second part, that we should show our appreciation to our mothers, but we don't do it. That's also a sin.

You see, the man who does not show his appreciation to his mother, he doesn't curse his mother, he just keeps quiet. He just keeps quiet. He's put in the same category as the man who's cursing his father.

And you say, how can that be? It is, because this man's committing a sin and that man's committing a sin of omission, not doing what he should do. And we should not fall into either category. And the second category is, there is a kind of man who is pure in his own eyes, that means a self-righteous man, yet is not washed from his own filthiness.

He has no light on himself. He has high thoughts about his own spirituality. And that's another danger that particularly those who talk about the new and living way are in danger of.

Pure in their own eyes. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, John says in 1 John 1.8. We deceive ourselves if we say we have no sin. It's dangerous to be pure in our own eyes.

The third kind of person mentioned here is a proud person. Notice the person mentioned here. How lofty are his eyes.

Pride begins in the heart and gradually manifests itself in one's face and eyes. There's a haughtiness and an arrogance in the eyes of proud people. And humility also will finally manifest itself in the eyes.

And his eyelids are raised in arrogance. The way people look, you can make out that there's pride in their heart. That's what it says.

Pride cannot be hidden. It manifests even if you don't see it yourself. It's obvious to other people, even in your appearance.

And the fourth kind of person mentioned here is the man who takes advantage of others who are weaker than him. A kind of man whose teeth are like swords and his jaw teeth like knives to devour the afflicted from the earth and the needy from among men, oppressing the weak. Now notice the four types of people that are mentioned here who are evil.

First of all, one who is ungrateful to his earthly parents, that he speaks rudely to his father and he does not show his appreciation to his mother. That's an evil person. Another type of person who is self-righteous, thinks he's pure in his own eyes.

The third, proud, his eyes lifted out. And the fourth, one who is hard and unmerciful towards those who are helpless. And that lack of mercy can be seen in teeth that are like knives, ready to judge someone for some wrong that they have done, to be harsh and hard in judgment without mercy.

So there are four types of people there, ungrateful, self-righteous, proud and unmerciful, that are put forth as particularly evil people and woe unto us if we ever fall into that category. Now verse 15 says the leech. You know what a leech is? A leech is one of those bloodsuckers that cling on to our legs and go through

dirty water and sucks your blood.

And it says the leech has got two daughters and both daughters have got the same name. Give me, give me. And it's speaking about a covetous attitude.

An attitude of only wanting to receive. There's a curse in it, because Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. But the leech has got two daughters.

And of course Adam has got many children with that name. Give me, give me, give me. The leech has got only two, but Adam's got millions.

There are three things that will not be satisfied. And he compares this selfish wanting to receive, receive, from others attitude, which is not cleansed out, to, he says this is exactly like these four things, which never say enough. Whatever they get, they're still not satisfied.

They want more. They want more. One is Sheol, that is the place of departed spirits, where people go after they die.

That's never satisfied in the sense it's always waiting for more people to come into hell. And the second is the barren womb, a woman who's never delivered a child, she's never satisfied until she has a child. Third, the earth that's never satisfied with rain, it always gets dry quickly and wants rain again.

And the fourth is fire, that whatever fuel you put into it, it burns up and says, more fuel, otherwise I'll die out. More fuel. And he says here that this covetous person is the lust to receive, with demands, give me, demands, making demands from other people.

It may not be that we want to give, but we want other people to serve us, and we want other people to respect us, and we want other people, give me, it may not be money, it may be give me respect. And I'm offended if you don't give me respect. Give me respect, give me honor, give me money, give me some consideration, give me some pity for all the things I'm going through in my life.

Give me, give me, give me, give me, the leech and its two daughters. Never saying, never satisfied, how blessed it is to be free from that through the cross, so that we can find our salvation in Jesus, who has set us free from this type of wanting things from people. We find everything that we need from God.

My God will supply all your needs, not only financially, emotionally, mentally, all our needs, God's able to supply. That's why we don't have to have a give me attitude towards human beings. We don't want their pity or sympathy or money or respect or honor, or any wretched thing.

God supplies all that we need. Verse 17, another word about our attitude to our parents. It's amazing to see how much the book of Proverbs has to say about it.

Solomon said a lot about it. And Agur, in a short chapter like this, repeats it again. The eye that mocks a father, that means making fun of a father, maybe some peculiarity in your father in his old age, or maybe some peculiarity in your mother, and scorns a mother, like Ham, Noah's son who was cursed.

The ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it. Let me read it in the Good News Bible. Anyone who makes fun of his father or despises his mother in her old age ought to be eaten by the vultures or have his eyes picked out by wild ravens.

He deserves to have his eyes picked out, because with his eyes, he's looking at his father and mother, and instead of being grateful to them for all that they suffered in bringing him up, he is despising them for something he sees defective in them, and scorns them, because he's so much smarter and so much cleverer and so much more capable. And the word of God says, he deserves to have his eyes plucked out by the wild ravens. Verse 18.

Here's another group of four things. He says, there are three things which are too wonderful for me, four which I do not understand. The way of an eagle in the sky, and I want you to notice in all these things, that all these things mentioned, the first three particularly, they don't leave any track behind them.

There's no trace. Eagle flies through the sky and there's no mark in the sky of the eagle having flown that way. If you ride a cycle through a muddy road, there's a track of the cycle, but an eagle through the sky, there's no trace of it.

And a serpent glides on a rock, and you look at the rock, and you don't know that a serpent has gone over that, because there's no track left behind, no trace of that serpent moving on the rock. And thirdly, a ship in the middle of the sea, that also, immediately behind the ship, there's a little wake, but you go over that sea a few minutes later, and there's no trace that a ship has gone over. It's all covered up.

It moves, and its track is covered up. The eagle in the sky, the serpent in the rock, and the ship in the sea. And it says in exactly the same way, it is between man and a woman, in their mutual relationship.

And it's speaking about it, not in a good way, but in those secret things, in relationships between man and woman, which are not moral, which are not upright, which are not straightforward, and there's no track left of it. It's all hidden, but God sees it all, can be hidden from the eyes of men. And Agur says it's amazing, the way of a man with a maid.

He says, I can't understand it. I can't understand how a man can be so stupid to go and fall for a woman's attractiveness perhaps, or the wiles of a woman, without living in the fear of God. And he expands on that in verse 20, he says, just like these four mentioned above, is the way of an adulterous woman.

She eats, wipes her mouth, and says, I've done no wrong. She's left no track of it. She eats, wipes her mouth, she commits adultery, goes and has a bath, and says, I'm all right.

Tried to cover up everything, but the Word of God says that all fornicators and adulterers will be judged by God one day, Hebrews 13, 4. And one can be sure that on the basis of that, just that one verse, the vast majority of humanity will be judged immediately with that one verse. And that verse tells us to be extremely careful not to allow love to stir up towards someone in the opposite sex, without allowing it to be under control. The way of a man with a maid, do not allow those emotions to get out of hand.

Then you do things, and you have to cover it up, and you have to hide it. You've got to keep it under control. Agur says, it amazes me how foolishly men allow their emotions to go out of control in this area.

And that's a good warning for us to take seriously, particularly young men. For us, of course, the standard is much higher in the New Testament, where it says we are not even to look and lust. There again, we can apply the New Testament standard here, that a man can look and lust, and there's no track left of it, just like the eagle in the sky.

He's done it, and it looks as though he hasn't done it. No evidence of it anywhere. But God has seen it, and he's recorded it.

Those who live in the fear of God will really be wholehearted to be free from this sin as soon as possible. Verse 21 to 23 relates to four types of people who get what they don't deserve. First of all, I'll read that in the Good News Bible.

There are four things that the earth itself cannot tolerate. A slave who becomes a king, a fool who has all that he wants to eat, a hateful woman who finally gets married, and a servant girl who takes the place of her mistress. You see, these are people who get what they don't deserve.

A slave doesn't deserve to be a king, but he becomes a king, and then he doesn't remain humble. He becomes arrogant. A fool gets all that he wants to eat and becomes proud of it.

Likewise, a hateful woman who finally gets married and becomes a real nuisance to her husband. And a servant girl who grew up as a servant, but finally took the place of her mistress. And we can say that this is the condition of many who have received the grace of God as well.

The grace of God is something that we have received that we don't deserve. A slave has become a king. A fool, that's what we were, has now been given more than enough to eat.

A hateful woman has now got the possibility of being the bride of Christ. And a servant girl is now going to be the bride of Christ. And when people come to this place, it's so difficult to remain in humility.

And that is the reason why so many people who have received grace have abused grace and forgotten that once upon a time, I was a slave. Once upon a time, I was a fool. Once upon a time, I was just a servant woman, a bitter hateful person.

And Jesus picked me up. It's good for us to remember our past condition. Here it's referring to people who forget their past condition when they come into God's goodness in some area.

And it's warning us not to make that mistake. Now in contrast to all these big things listed in verse 23, like the ones we just considered, he contrasts in verse 24 to 28, four small things. He says, there are four things that are small on the earth, but they are exceedingly wide.

First of all, the ants, they are not strong, but they store up food in summer for the winter. Second, the badgers, they are delicate little animals, the living Bible says, who protect themselves from wild animals by living among the rocks. You see, these badgers are so small, they can go into a little cleft in the rock and hide there.

And even the lion can't reach it because the lion's paw will not go into that cleft in the rock. And so it says they are so clever. They're so small.

And the third one is the locust. Though they have no king, no leader, they stay together. And then the fourth is the lizard.

The living Bible says they're easy to catch and kill, yet you find them even in king's palaces. And we can apply that to the New Testament and see four wonderful truths here. For those who like to see spiritual truths in these Old Testament pictures, first of all, the ant is a picture of one who prepares for the future.

That is for eternity and realizes that this world is not my home. And so I'm going to save up for eternity. The fool is the one who saves up only for this world.

The ant is wise and saves up for the future. And so that's the first lesson. Though they are small, they are wise.

Go to the ant and learn wisdom to store up for the future. The ant's future is in winter, but our future is in eternity. And to store up for eternity means to use our energy, time, money, resources, everything in such a way that we lay up treasure for the future.

That we can learn from the ants. The second is the rock badger. These little badgers, they're so small, they hide in the rock.

And that's the picture of Christ. Their small size enables them to hide in the rock. They build their homes on the rock.

That's what Jesus told us. The wise man built his house on the rock, a picture of obedience to the word of God. He who hears my word and does it has built his house on the rock like this little badger who knows that when the rain comes and washes away the sand, it doesn't touch his house because his house is built on the rock.

They make their houses in the rock. The third one is the locusts. They don't have any leader and that's a picture of the church as well.

But we don't really have an earthly leader. Jesus is our only leader and he's not on earth, he's in heaven. But these locusts, even though they don't have a leader, they know how to stay together in unity.

They don't fight with each other. When they go attacking a crop on a field, they go together and they don't fight with each other and waste their time like a lot of believers do. They know this is the thing we have to eat up and they go and eat that up and they help one another.

They stay together. They know that their strength is in being united. And here the locusts have that wisdom of being united.

But alas, many believers don't. Even some husbands and wives don't know that it's stronger to be united. A lot of believers don't know that, that our strength against Satan lies in being united.

And that's the third lesson God wants us to learn of wisdom from the locusts. From the ants, from the badgers and from the locusts. And they all go out in ranks, indicates that each one knows its position.

It's like an army. They know each their position. It's like a lot of aircraft flying in formation, the locusts when they move out in ranks.

And it's a wonderful thing when we have a church where everyone knows his place and accepts it joyfully in unity with all the others, without jealousy, without competition. And then we can remember the locusts to teach us a lesson in wisdom in this area. And fourthly, the lizard which says you can catch it and kill it with your hands, so easy.

And yet, you go to the palace of the king and the lizard is there too, where you can't go. The lizard has got there because it's small in size. You see, we can reach the king's palace if we are small in our own

thoughts.

Big people find it difficult to get in there. But the crocodile is really just another bigger lizard, little bigger in size. But you can't find crocodiles in the king's palaces because they're too big.

But lizards get in there. The smaller we are in our own thoughts, the easier it is for us to get into king's palaces. And that lizard hanging on the roof and clinging onto that roof, defying the law of gravity, is an amazing picture of the power of faith by which we can... It's there in the king's palace on the roof.

And it's a picture of how we also live without falling by faith, defying the law of sin and death. Upside down on a wall, a picture of faith, holding on with nothing in the hand, just that power that God's given it to hold on to that wall and not fall. So there are four beautiful pictures of the Christian life.

And then he says in verses 29 to 31 about four things that are impressive. I want to read that in the Good News Bible. There are four things that are impressive to watch as they walk.

Lions, the strongest of all animals and afraid of none. Goats, which can climb mountains with ease and strutting cocks or peacocks for their beauty. And kings in front of their people.

In front of their people means as a forerunner. So what Agur is saying is just like it's beautiful to see a lion, majestic, powerful, strong lion out there in the forest. It's beautiful and impressive to see a peacock with its feathers spread out and a he-goat climbing up those rocky crags in the mountains.

In the same way it's a beautiful picture to see a king who is a leader walking in front of his people, a forerunner for his people. And we can apply that to a father in a home who is the king in his home. It's beautiful to see a home where the father as a king is in front of his wife and children leading them.

He says it's as beautiful as seeing a majestic lion or a peacock. It's impressive. Verse 32, if you have been foolish in exalting yourself or if you have plotted evil, two things.

One, if you have been stupid enough to be proud and second, if you have been stupid enough to have evil attitudes towards other believers. Put your hand on your mouth, feel ashamed of yourself. You should feel ashamed of yourself that you've been foolish enough to be proud and to have an evil attitude towards another human being.

There's nothing to be proud of there. You should be ashamed of yourself. Agur had light on these things.

He speaks about humility again and again and then he concludes with anger. He says the churning of milk produces butter. In other words, if you leave the milk just like that, you don't get butter.

You've got to churn it and churn it and churn it and churn it, it becomes butter. In the same way, ringing the nose, churning the nose, ringing it, ringing it, that'll produce blood. In the same way, it says, if you don't get rid of your anger and you churn the anger inside you, it will finally produce strife just like that milk becomes butter.

So the strife comes because someone who got angry or upset or irritated with someone did not get rid of that anger and irritation immediately or got offended with someone, didn't get rid of that immediately. You know what churning is? To meditate on it, to roll it, to take that, just like you churn the milk into butter, to roll that in your mind. Think about it again.

Tomorrow, think about it again, what that person did, what that person said, and you churn it and churn it and churn it and churn it. One day, as sure as the butter comes out of the milk, strife will come forth between you and that person, that's sure. And so it says, don't be such a fool.

Don't churn that anger. And we've found a more excellent way in the New Testament to die, to bear the dying of Christ in our life, so that we can overcome anger, not only strife, but we can overcome anger as well. Now we turn to chapter 31, the words of King Lemuel, chapter 31 and verse 1. The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him, in the history of Israel, as far as we know, there's been no such king as Lemuel, because all the names of the kings right from King Saul down to the last king are recorded in the books of Kings and Chronicles, and you look through that list and there is no such king called Lemuel.

And yet the word El is the Hebrew for God, which means he must have been a Jewish man, he couldn't have been outside of Israel. And so it's likely that this is another name perhaps for Solomon, because it means with God or devoted to God, maybe that's what his mother wanted him to be. What it means therefore, because it says here in chapter 31 verse 1, King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him, and if King Lemuel is Solomon, then who was his mother? You know, Bathsheba, the woman who was at first the wife of Uriah, and whom David committed adultery with and killed her husband and married her, and the first son that was born to her died as God's judgment, and then when she was expecting another baby, she must have really feared whether God would judge her again.

And it's likely that a spiritual transformation came across her life, she who had fallen so deeply, and if that is true, here is a chapter in the Bible written in the words of Bathsheba. Amazing what grace can do to a fallen sinful woman like that. And Solomon, it's in all likelihood Solomon, because there is no such king called Lemuel, and here we have in chapter 4 we saw what Solomon says, what his father taught him, and now he writes what his mother taught him.

Just like Timothy's mother taught him the word of God, here apparently Solomon received instruction, not only from David, but also from Bathsheba, his mother. And we see something of Bathsheba's humility here. It's a wonderful picture of a mother who is teaching her son many things, how to rule as a king and how to choose a wife.

Would that all mothers were like this. And the first thing she says is, what oh my son, what oh son of my womb, what oh son of my vows, here is a son who was born in answer to prayer, a son whom she had dedicated to the Lord from the time that she conceived him, like we should do with all our children. And what does she say, what, what, what, three times.

In other words, she says, I don't know what to say, I lack wisdom. Wonderful that the book of Proverbs closes with Agur and Bathsheba, both of them saying, I don't know, I have no wisdom. What shall I advise you, my son? And that's the reason why their words have been inspired.

They recognize their lack. Think of a mother who says, my son, I just don't know how to teach you. And she sought God for wisdom and God gave her such wisdom that is recorded here in scripture.

Amazing. Any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, what, what, what shall I say? I don't know. And then she gets wisdom from God.

And the first warning she gives Solomon was, don't give your strength to women or your ways. Be careful of women. The first warning, what a prophetic warning it was to her son.

And the sad thing is her son did not listen to it for too long, listened to it for a little while in his life. And after that fell in the very area which his mother had warned him. First of all, that's a warning for children to take seriously.

When your parents tell you something, don't take it lightly. That may be the very area where if you're not careful, you're in danger of falling. Don't give your strength to women.

If only Solomon had taken that seriously, when he wrote the book of Proverbs, he was taking it seriously. He thought he would take it seriously, but he drifted away. A warning for all of us that a man like Solomon can write such a book and then fall away into the very sins which he was trying to warn other people about.

And the second thing, second exhortation is self-control. O Lemuel, kings should not drink wine. Let other people drink wine, but you control yourself.

And he did not obey that exhortation either. In fact, as you read through this chapter, you find that Solomon did not obey the exhortations of his mother at all. He wrote it down, but he didn't take it seriously later on in life.

That's a sad thing. Verse five, if rulers get drunk, they will pervert the rights of the afflicted. And that teaches us how serious it is to be in judgment and to pass an unrighteous judgment over an innocent person.

That's a serious crime. It puts a great fear upon us as fathers and wherever we have responsibility, in offices, in the church, not to be unrighteous, not to be drunk with the wine of this world, that we become unrighteous. And our faculties lack discernment after that.

We can apply to the New Testament wine of worldliness that can make us lose our sense of discernment. But he says wine is for those who are perishing, as an anesthetic, to him whose life is bitter, give it to him, let him drink and forget his poverty and remember his trouble no more. But you, verse eight, speak up for the poor and needy.

That's a wonderful exhortation. We've seen it before in the book of Proverbs. And here again it comes, open your mouth for the dumb, be on the side of the weak, support those who are weak and helpless for the rights of those who are unfortunate, fight for their rights if you are a leader, open your mouth and judge righteously.

That's not the time to keep quiet when you see some poor helpless person being taken advantage of. Defend the rights of the afflicted and the needy. When I think of the afflicted and needy, I think of all the poor sincere believers suffering under the yoke of ungodly priests and pastors and bishops in so many denominations.

And it's our responsibility to speak up for them and not be diplomatic. We have to stand up for the rights of these who are being oppressed by ungodly so-called Christian leaders. Open your mouth and speak up for them.

Those are our exhortations generally for Solomon. And then she comes to this tremendous passage from verses 10 to 31 where she says, now I'll tell you how to choose a wife and Solomon did not obey that. He did not obey as far as I can see one single thing in this whole chapter.

That's a sad thing. It's a sad thing. He took it seriously in the beginning otherwise he wouldn't even have written it down.

But he drifted away from it and we've come to the end of our book study in the book of Proverbs and I tell you we can think we're wise. Let's remember this that the man who wrote this book fell away finally. And if that doesn't put a fear in our hearts, I don't know what will.

Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. Verses 10 to 31 is an advice to all young brothers on the type of wife you should choose. It's an advice to all sisters young and old on the type of woman you should be.

And there are 22 verses here in the Hebrew. Each verse begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet like Aleph, Beth and so on ABCD in English. The Hebrew has got 22 alphabets and the reason why they wrote it like that is so that it can be memorized as a poem and so that people could remember this.

It's easy to remember a poem like the songs we sing. It's easy to remember so that young people would remember this is the type of woman I must look for as a wife. And the first thing spoken about her is a virtuous woman.

A woman of virtue. Not her talents or her education or whether she's a graduate or not or whether she's capable or not or no. A woman of virtue.

Look for that. Don't look for capabilities and abilities and talents. And the Good News Bible says how hard it is to find such a wife.

Not easy. There are not many. Don't think there are many that we can just pick and choose, pick any one.

There are very few how hard it is to find a wife like that. And her worth is far above jewels. That means you'll be an extremely wealthy man if you get such a wife.

That's what it says. The heart of a husband safely trusts in her. He has full confidence in such a woman of virtue and character.

Even if she's not very educated and capable and clever. Don't be such an idiot to go for a woman just because she's capable and talented and educated and clever. Musically minded.

Oh, wonderful. Stupidity to think that that has any value in God's kingdom. Virtue.

Character. Most important. Such a husband is a lucky man.

He's a rich man. It says he will have no lack of gain means he is so rich because he's got such a wife. He doesn't need a dowry or any stupid thing.

When people ask for a dowry, it's because they feel they've got a pretty cheap bargain in this woman. So let me make up for it in the money. Now don't be so stupid to ask for money.

Get the money in the woman. A woman of virtue. Then you won't need any dowry.

That's the dowry itself. If you get a woman like this. And she never lets her husband down as it says in another translation.

That's the meaning there. She never lets her husband down. And so her heart of her husband can trust in her completely to always stand by her.

Because it says in verse 12, she only does him good. She never lets him down. She only does him good.

Like it says about Jesus in Acts 10 38. He went about doing good. Here's a woman who goes about doing only good.

Not evil. And that also not just for one or two days. But all the days of her life consistently till the end of her life she keeps on doing good.

Her first love never wanes and becomes less. She continuously consistently does good to her husband till the end of her life. Don't you think such a husband is a rich man? Of course he is.

In the living bible that verse reads like this. She will not hinder him but will help him all her life. A woman can be a hindrance to her husband's job and life and ministry.

But here is a woman who is a help. Like Eve was created to be a help meet. Think of a woman like that.

You can understand why Bathsheba said it's hard to find such a woman but look for one like this. And if necessary wait and don't be in such a hurry. And get the wrong one.

One who is a help means one who adjusts her life according to her husband's calling. It's very difficult for a woman because when she gets married she has to alter her whole way of life to adjust it to her husband's job and calling in life. And not many women can do that.

Many women still go along in their own way even after they get married. But it's a blessed woman who knows how to adjust according to her husband's way of life. Whether her husband is poor or has this job or that job.

Who knows how to adjust and be a help to her husband. Verse 13. The first thing it says after these general statements is that she uses her hands.

And it's a wise man who looks at the hands and not at the face. All the stupid people in the world look at a woman's face. But the word of God says look at her hands.

Not at her face. She looks for wool and flax and works with her hands in delight. The first thing is here's a woman who knows how to stitch clothes.

And that's a good thing for mothers to teach their daughters. And it says here she works with delight. That means not a grudging, complaining, oh I have to do this and do this.

No, it's a joyful working with her hands. Look for a woman who knows how to work with her hands. And who knows how to work with her hands joyfully.

Not grumbling and complaining that she has to do all this for her husband and children and all that. But joyfully. In delight.

Hard to find. But pray that God will give you such a one. Verse 14, it speaks again about her hands involved in cooking.

That's the second thing mothers have got to teach their daughters. It's very practical. It's not talking about Bible knowledge and she can explain the new and living way and all that.

Those are the foolish young men who go around looking for people like that. No, God doesn't call a woman to be a Bible teacher. It's foolish to look for someone who can explain the doctrine.

I mean it's the height of stupidity. There are a lot of stupid people like that. But she can stitch.

She can cook. And she works. She's got virtue.

She's like merchant ships. She brings her food from afar. That means she is inventive in the type of meals she prepares for her family.

She doesn't think of the same drab old stuff every day. She's inventive. Not going in for all unnecessary wasteful expenditure.

But she thinks how can I make this more interesting. She brings her food from afar means she's got special surprises for her family. But think of these two things particularly that relate to the hands.

Stitching and cooking. Something that all young girls should learn. And that all mothers should teach their young daughters.

And then it says in verse 15 she rises while it is night. That means while it is not yet day. It says in the living Bible that she gets up before the sun rises to prepare breakfast for her household and plans the day's work for her servant girls.

She's got servant girls working for her but she wants to plan the day's work for her servant girls and wakes up the servant girls and wakes up early herself to make breakfast for her family. See there it is. Preparing food, stitching clothes.

These practical things. And then verse 16. You see it says here there's some orderliness in planning.

I don't want you to notice that. This woman is not a disorderly half-assert type of person. She plans her day.

How she's going to do it. Now how she's going to get her servant girls to do something during the day. There's orderliness in her life.

No laziness. Verse 16. She considers a field and buys it.

She thinks yes now in the future I will need something for my family. Here's a good field in which I can plant something. This is not applying to our situation here in Bangalore.

It's obvious. But in those days in Israel we can apply it into our own situation. Like it says in the Living Bible.

She watches for bargains. It's interesting. In verse 18.

She watches for bargains. That means she knows she's not so rich. She's not a millionaire.

But she sees that something's going cheap there which can be useful for the family and she watches for that. She gets it. She considers a field and buys it careful in her purchases.

She doesn't see something and say yeah I want that. No she thinks do I need that. She considers whether it's a field.

For us it may not be a field. It may be something else that you go into the market to buy and you think about it. Yeah do I really need that in the house.

Maybe I can do without it. She considers. She's careful in her expenditure.

Not spendthrift. She considers and then she buys. Whatever it is.

Principle is not a field. It's considering and buy. And she plants a vineyard with her own hands.

With her own earnings. What is her earnings? That doesn't mean she's going to work. You'll find out later on in the chapter how she gets money without going to work outside the house.

It's amazing. But she's got her own earnings to supplement her husband's income. And verse 17 in the Good News Bible reads like this.

She's a hard worker, strong and industrious. We could say in today's language she's got muscular arms. Good to see if your future wife's got some muscles instead of just a pretty face.

That's a good thing to look for. Watch her arms. See if there's some muscles there.

Otherwise the pretty face won't help when you got work to do in the house. I'll tell you that. Verse 18 reads like this in the Good News Bible.

She knows the value of everything she makes and works late into the night. There's an amazing woman who gets up before dawn and works late into night. Of course she probably could do that in her younger days and she grows old.

It may have been different. But her attitude in her youth anyway was that she was not lazily lolling around in bed till late in the morning. But would get up early and get on with the job and work late into night.

And then further, verse 19, this is referring to the sewing machine. It says she stretches out her hands to the sewing machine and her hands grasp the spindle. Again her hands.

She's working with her hands. It's amazing. It's quite a contrast when you read in the book of Isaiah chapter 3. The Lord says, Isaiah, these daughters of Zion, they walk so delicately and on their toes and with their dancing steps and their earrings bobbing.

We could say that today. All these ladies today with so many inches of their midriff showing under their blouses and all this evil that there is. Daughters of Zion.

Terrible. And all this delicate way of going. Yeah, this is quite a contrast to what we see here in Proverbs chapter 31.

Quite a contrast. Here's one who's working with her hands at home. She's not going around all this delicate type of way out in the world.

No? Why is she working so much with her hands? It's not just for herself. It says in verse 20, she does something for the poor. It says in the Living Bible, verse 19 and 20 reads like this in the Living Bible.

She sews clothes for the poor. She's stitching. Her hands go out to the sewing machine to stitch for the poor and generously gives to the needy.

It's not just selfishly. It's she's concerned. Her hands are stretched out to help the poor.

She earns all that she can. She saves all that she can and she gives all that she can. It's a wonderful woman.

Really a wholehearted spiritual sister. And like Solomon says, hard to find. But there are a few.

Verse 21 reads like this in the Living Bible. She has no fear of winter for her household, for she has made warm clothes for all her family. She's got forethought.

Winter's coming. I need some warm clothes for the family and she's made it with her own hands. She's worked with her own hands and cared for the winter.

Verse 22, she makes bedspreads. And in the Living Bible it says with the finest tapestry. That means she's got a sense of beauty about her.

She gathers up all the leftover bits of cloth from her stitching and stitches it all together and makes a bedspread. And you think it's such an expensive thing. Actually it's just the leftover bits of cloth which she got together and made a beautiful tapestry bedspread out of it.

Think of her attitude. Not to waste anything and to use everything profitably and attractiveness. And what about her own dress? It says here that her clothing is fine linen and purple like the clothing of the bride in the New Testament and simplicity.

Her clothing is not gold ornaments and earrings and all this stupid stuff. Fine linen. Simplicity and modesty in her dress.

And she makes it herself it says. In other words she's careful that some stupid tailor does not put on the latest fashion onto her clothes. Of course she doesn't know how to stitch herself.

She'd tell the tailor specifically, I don't want any of these rotten latest fashions please in the way you stitch my clothes. I want it like this. She's very careful about the way she gets her clothes stitched.

You see this is the type of woman you young people should look for. And verse 23 her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land. And that means that because of the way she has lived she has relieved her husband of all his household work so that he can do his task in the office.

Today it's not the gates it's the office it's the office you work in. Her husband is a relaxed man in the office because he hasn't come to work with tension on his mind because he got a yelling and a shelling from his

wife in the morning. He's relaxed and his work is so efficient because she has made it so easy for him to do his work and he prospers in his work in his office or whatever he does whether he's a leading citizen there or gates means leadership in those days.

And the woman made him a leader. Behind every great leader spiritual leader there is a great woman. She has made her husband know to be known because of her wisdom at home.

In contrast we can say there's many a wife who has been a hindrance to her husband's ministry. Many a wife unfortunately who've been hindrances to their husband's ministry. Verse 24.

She makes linen garments and sells them. I told you about her earnings. This is how she earns.

She doesn't leave her home but she makes linen garments and sells them. She sells things from her garden and she sells the clothes she stitches and supplies belts to the tradesmen. She contacts tradesmen and earns something and supplements her husband's income because her husband is not a millionaire.

They're simple people, poor people. So she knows that she's got to do something to make sure that ends meet that we don't become beggars or get into debt. Verse 25.

She's called here a woman of strength even though weaker sex. A woman of strength and of dignity. Her clothing are strength.

This inner spiritual strength and dignity means she doesn't go around gossiping and chit-chatting useless stuff and foolish jokes and jesting and all that. There's a dignity about her even though she's young. There's a dignity about her.

This is not talking about an old 70 year old woman. This is talking about a young 20-25 year old who's got some dignity about her instead of going around like all the other loose girls chatting and gossiping and cracking useless jokes. There's a dignity about her and she's not afraid of old age and she's not afraid of the future.

She smiles at the future means she looks into the future. When she's old she says, I'm not afraid of that. I've lived a good life and I'm young for the glory of God and she's not afraid of that.

She's not afraid of the whole future. She's not afraid of inflation. She's not afraid of anything for her family because she's using each day for the glory of God in this way.

She looks to the future with confidence and here's another wonderful thing. Verse 26, when she opens her mouth it's not gossip, it's wisdom and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. Wisdom and kindness are guiding all her speech.

Some people have kindness but no wisdom but it's a wonderful thing when you have wisdom and kindness in your speech and think of a woman who's got that gentle wisdom as it says in the Good News Bible. She speaks with a gentle wisdom. Now I'll tell you something.

Listen carefully young men. Usually women who are very efficient and capable are also very hard tongues. It's very difficult to find a hard-working capable woman who also knows how to speak with gentle wisdom.

People who are very efficient are usually very domineering. They don't know submission but not this one. She's got rough hands because she works with them and a soft tongue.

The people in the world have got soft hands and a rough tongue. Now don't make that mistake of getting a woman with soft hands and a rough tongue. Rough hands and a soft tongue.

What a blessing it is. That's the rule for her speech. A gentle wisdom.

The Living Bible says kindness and wisdom are the rule for her speech. For everything she says that means there's no nagging. No nagging of the husband, no nagging of the children.

Gentle wisdom. Verse 27, she looks after the ways of her household. Means that she looks after her children.

She ensures that rotten magazines don't come into the house, that the children don't get into useless habits. She looks after the ways of her household and she does not eat the bread of idleness. Means that she's not lazy.

She's watchful all the time, instructing her children, disciplining her children when they are using words which they've picked up in school which are not proper to speak. She's looking after the ways of her household. What a woman this is.

Her children rise up and bless her. One day children of such a mother will stand up and say, thank you Lord that you gave me such a mother. Her husband also will one day, even if he doesn't appreciate her value sufficiently in the beginning, will one day rise up and say, many daughters have done nobly but you excel them all.

You are the best. And I believe that every brother can say that about his wife because God gives us what we deserve. As you listen to all these brothers you can think, oh I wish my wife were like this and then you got it all wrong.

Because this is not an exhortation for you to wish your wife were like this if you're already married but think of what you could be yourself as a husband. God has given you the type of wife you deserve and if you didn't get a better one it's because you yourself don't deserve a better one. I mean you yourself are not so spiritual.

Why should God be so unrighteous as to give you such a spiritual wife? You got to be wholehearted in order to get a wholehearted wife. Everybody would like a wholehearted wife. There are a lot of immoral men in the world who like pure women for their wives.

It's highly unrighteous. It would be highly unrighteous for an unspiritual man to say, God give me a really spiritual wife. God would be very unrighteous if he answered that prayer.

No, God gives us the wife we deserve. What's the secret of her life? Verse 30. It's not her beauty.

It's not her charm. Charm is deceitful. Beauty is vain.

But she fears God. That's the secret of her life. The fear of God with which the book of Proverbs began.

The beginning of wisdom ends with a woman, not a man, but a woman who fears God. It says here in verse 31, the closing verse, give her the product of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates means praise her publicly. She deserves to be praised publicly in the gates.

She deserves the respect of everyone. She deserves recognition and honor from people such a wife. Now as your sisters look at this passage, you can see a goal there which you may not have attained to.

You may not have reached. But you can set that before you and say, Lord, I want to read and read and reread and reread and meditate on this passage to see the type of woman that you want me to be. That all my explanation of the doctrine and knowledge of the new and living way doesn't even account for one verse in this whole section.

But it's gentleness and wisdom on my tongue and hard work with my hands so that my hands become rough with hard work. That's the mark of the woman whom God calls one who is worth more than all the riches of the world. Such a woman can make whoever she marries an extremely rich man.

And whatever her husband earns, even if it's very little, they'll have no problem in making ends meet because she has wisdom. Think of that challenge, brothers and sisters, for those of us who are going to be married to think of finding a woman like this.

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