

Lesson One – Introduction and Overview

Proverbs 31:10-31

To understand Proverbs 31, we need an overview of Proverbs, since this passage is must be understood in its context – as a part of the Book of Proverbs.

Proverbs is part of the wisdom literature of the Bible, which also includes: Job and Ecclesiastes. There are also many passages in the book of James in the New Testament that draw from or have corollaries to the Book of Proverbs.

Proverbs is a book of practical wisdom.

Solomon authored most of the book. Some portions were written by unknown “wise men.” (22:17-24:34). Agur and King Lemuel authored other portions. (Chs 30 and 31:1-9)

The book is in three main divisions.

Chapters 1-9: A little book devoted to the theme of extolling wisdom.

Chapters 10 to 24: A long run of proverbs.

Chapter 25 – end: Seven epigrams, proverb-clusters and an acrostic (our passage)

Arthur T. Pierson, has given us a definition of a proverb:

“A proverb is a wise saying in which a few words are chosen instead of many, with a design to condense wisdom into a brief form both to aid memory and stimulate study.”

The purpose of the Book is set out in Proverbs 1:2-4, 6.

It is a fivefold purpose:

For attaining wisdom and discipline

For understanding words of insight

For acquiring a disciplined and prudent life.

For giving prudence to the simple

For understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

Wisdom:

Of the several words for wisdom and related synonyms used in Proverbs, the primary and most frequent one is “hokmah.”

In the Old Testament, this word is used to speak of the skill of craftsmen, sailors, singers, mourners, administrators and counsellors.

In the Biblical sense, being wise means: being skilled in godly living.

Proverbs 9:10

Wisdom begins with a right relationship with God.

“Wisdom grows in proportion to our growth in knowledge and obedience to Him.”
Walvoord & Zuck, ‘The Bible Knowledge Commentary.

Wisdom brings many benefits. Proverbs 2:1-22

There is a progression in these purposes in Proverbs 1. Based on the meanings of the Hebrew words, we see that the Book is meant to impart:

Knowledge.

Understanding.

Adjusting (correction) of our path – by humbly receiving the Word of God.

Understanding the deeper things of God’s Word and facing the most difficult times of life (maturity).

Summary:

The purpose of the Book of Proverbs is to teach us how to live wisely, if we will humbly receive the Word of God. Through the Book of Proverbs we will grow in knowledge and understanding of what is right and learn how to live wisely, in applying the Word of God to our lives, even to the point that we can deal with life’s deep difficulties and trials.

*Notice that there is a repetition in this passage in Proverbs 1:2-6:
“Correction” is repeated twice.*

Charles H. Spurgeon said:

I willingly bear witness to the fact that I owe more to my Lord’s fire, hammer and file than to anything else in His workshop. Sometimes I wonder if I have ever learned anything except at the end of God’s rod. When my classroom is darkest, I see best. Charles H. Spurgeon. (Streams in the Desert).

What then is the purpose of Proverbs 31?

The same purposes apply to this passage ---- since it is contained within the Book of Proverbs.

Solomon’s teaching methods:

Proverbs 4:1-7

In Proverbs Chapters 1-5 Lecture/Classroom Method.

In Proverbs Chapters 6 – 31:9: Practical Applications/Labwork.

In Proverbs Chapter 31:10-31: A Mentor/Example of Wise Living.

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Applications:

Is there a need for wisdom?

Are there challenges in your life that require skill and discernment?

Are there situations that seem overwhelming to us?

What types of responsibilities do you think are the most daunting or challenging for women?

What skills are needed by a woman to successfully manage life and a household?

Do we have an influence on others?

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Why does the Book of Proverbs end with this passage?

This passage (Proverbs 31:10-31) ends the Book of Proverbs because: Often the highest and best method of teaching is by providing a living example. This is an example of a life lived well.

