

Week 4: A Woman with No Tears

Day One:

The book of Proverbs is a compiled set of writings with different authors. Solomon is credited with writing the majority of the work, but it is generally held that Lemuel (or his mother) wrote Proverbs 31. The book was written in ancient Israel somewhere between 800 to 600 B.C. And, though it is not often mentioned in throughout the Bible, snow accompanied most of the Proverbs 31 winters.

Common in Palestine during the winter, Lebanon almost always has snow within view the entire year.

1. Read Proverbs 31:21

2. Who has she protected?

Again, the Proverbs 31 woman is demonstrating her care for others by protecting not only her family but her whole household.

They are clothed in scarlet. How chic!!

Yes, the woman spun wool with her hands. Yes she worked morning and night. Yes her family would be warm . . . But (YES) she had style. Scarlet was a symbol of wealth and success.

3. Read 2 Samuel 1:24

Scarlet is not a *conservative* color. This woman dressed her family in scarlet to get noticed.

4. Is there anything wrong with wearing attention grabbing clothes? Knowing the rest of the Proverbs 31 woman's character . . . what limitations do you think she would place on her wardrobe?

Day Two:

1. Repeat aloud Proverbs 31:21-22 five times.
2. Write down any thoughts you have about these verses.

Day Three:

1. Repeat aloud Proverbs 31:21-22 five times.
2. Write down any thoughts you have about these verses.

Day Four:

1. Read Proverbs 31:22 and Proverbs 7:16.

“She makes coverings for herself”. Though we would commonly think that this refers to a woman’s clothing, instead this “coverings” (the same as in Proverbs 7:16) refers to the dressings of a bed.

I want to introduce a new idea when studying the Proverbs 31 woman. Not only is the passage alphabetical in Hebrew, it also follows a major and several minor menorah patterns.

The menorah, a candelabrum where six branches depart from a single center branch, is part of Hebrew tradition. In a menorah pattern, the same idea applies. There are several two coordinating ideas that encompass one central branch. Look at the following examples :



Example One:

- A Who can find a “virtuous woman”? (vs.10)
- B Her husband trusts her; she does him good all the days of her life (v. 11-12)
- C She makes provision for her household/no idleness (v. 13-19)
- X The virtuous woman is a blessing to others (v. 20-26)
- C She makes provision for her household/no idleness (v. 27)
- B Her husband praises her: “You surpass them all.” (v. 28-29)
- A Conclusion: “Let her works praise her in the city gates” (vs. 30-31)

Example Two:

- A She shows generosity to those in need (vs. 20)
- B She does not fear the future – her household is clothed in crimson (vs. 21)
- C She makes herself clothing of fine linen and purple (vs. 22)
- X Her husband is known in the city gates among the elders (vs. 23)
- C She makes linen garments and sells them (vs. 24)
- B She prepares for the future – “Strength and dignity are her clothing.” (vs. 25)
- A She speaks wisdom and teaches kindness (vs. 26)

2. Now you complete the following menoral pattern:

- A Verse 18
- B Verse 19
- X Verse 20
- B Verse 21
- A Verse 22

3. Knowing what you've just learned about coverings for a bed. . . were there any surprises revealed to you in this menoral pattern?

Day Five:

The virtuous woman was excellent in terms of style for home and household. It is also revealed that she wore silk and purple.

The silk that is referred to in Proverbs 31:22 is not silk like we know it today but shêsh (pronounced *shaysh*). This is the same linen that we've referred to before in verse 13.

The purple she wore was even more rare. To have died purple clothing, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* tells us that it was a extensive process involving hard labor. A shellfish was broken in order to give access to a small gland that contained a milky fluid. When exposed to the air, the fluid became red or purple. Even today the *Bible Encyclopedia* relays, "Piles of these broken shells still remain on the coast at Sidon and Tyre."

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary tells us that it took a whopping 250,000 mollusks to make one ounce of dye. Obviously the costly procedure was reserved only for the very wealthy and royalty.

1. Read Judges 8:26, 2 Chronicles 2:14 and Exodus 25:4.
2. Now read Song of Solomon 7:5 [The Groom Admires His Bride]

Day Six:

It is a common misconception to be Christian one must be dowdy. I frankly don't know where this lie began. Our model of a godly wife did not consider it a mark of spirituality to look impoverished or ordinary. Her household—all of it—stood out in their fine dress.

But her clothing/style/sensuality did not come at the expense of her first priorities. Read George Lawson's Commentary on Proverbs:

"If the virtuous woman has coverings of tapestry for her house, she makes them herself; if she is clothed with silk (or fine linen, as it may be rendered) and purple, she earns it by

her labors and good management. She does not starve her charity by her finery, nor spend upon her dress that which might support a poor family, and she does not reckon herself superior to the duties of a wife, nor exempted by wearing silk and purple from using her spindle and distaff. From all this it appears that the inspired writer allows the use of costly array to none but those who can afford it in a full consistency with the duties which they owe to their families, to the poor, and to all men”

(Commentary on Proverbs, George Lawson, pages 566-567).

Those of you may recall the New Testament call in 1 Timothy 2:9 that tells us *not* to dress in costly array. How do we explain this potential dischord in the Scriptures?

In the Old Testament wealth and godliness were not unheard of. Abraham, David and Solomon all were very wealthy. They were never condemned for having riches but for setting their hearts upon them.

1. Read Psalm 62:10

The New Testament seems to show a different view of wealth. There are not many accounted for Christians in this text that have amassed great wealth. But, understand the context, Christ-lovers were being persecuted and murdered. . . it’s difficult to focus on inconsequential things like clothing when your life is at stake.

2. Read the 1 Timothy 2:9 verse.
3. Do you think Paul wants us to dress in burlap?
4. Have you ever felt you were more concerned about how you looked as a Christian than how you were as a Christian?

Read Albert Barnes’s commentary:

“It is not supposed that all use of gold or pearls as articles of dress is here forbidden; but the idea is, that the Christian female is not to seek these as the adorning which she desires, or is not to imitate the world in these personal decorations. It may be a difficult question to settle how much ornament is allowable, and when the true line is passed. There is one general rule which is applicable to all, and which might regulate all. It is, that the true line is passed when more is thought of this external adorning, than of the ornament of the heart. Any external decoration which occupies the mind more than the virtues of the heart, and which engrosses the time and attention more, we may be certain is wrong. The apparel should be such as not to attract attention, such as shall leave the impression that the heart is not fixed on it.”