

“Lady Wisdom’s Repertoire” (Prov. 31:10-31)  
“Woman Wisdom’s Warrior Works”

1. Priceless (10)

- a. Portrait: A Pipe Dream? A simple reading of this complete alphabetic acrostic delineating the desired (if not perfect) homemaker would have us conclude that the answer to the first sentence is: “no one.” As wisely stated, this passage “remains a portrait of the most desirable woman, an image of the ideal wife intended for a predominantly male audience ... She embodies no one woman, but rather the desired attributes of many.”<sup>13 1</sup>
- b. Poem: This homemaker is seen also to be a business woman in the time when there was no “women’s lib” activism. This was a time when the men exclusively performed the business transactions and yet she is seen to do such vv. 14, 16. [See Ps. 112 for the male counterpart portrait.] However, we must remember the context and genre of this acrostic which is not to be taken fully nor merely strictly literally. Although her traits and functions model literal roles and adherence, this acrostic has a broader purpose.
- c. Person:
  - i. Lady Wisdom, seen primarily in the early chapters (1-9), is a personification of the wisdom of Christ and thus it is appropriate to bring this metaphorical lady of perfect wisdom back in picture to close the collection of speeches and sayings in this acrostic.
  - ii. Wisdom is the source, foundation, and Person upon whom the healthy, righteous, wise household is built. Christ is the only such foundation and fulfillment of such. Consider the following points (made at the onset of this series):
    1. Not unlike the call from wisdom in Proverbs, Jesus is the revelation of God (Heb. 1:1-3) the Word made flesh (Jn. 1:14). He is the Subject of Scripture (Lk. 24:27, 44, 45) and the One upon whom salvation rests (Jn. 5:39-40). And like Lady Wisdom calling forth (Prov. 1:20-21), Jesus called out for those to embrace His wisdom, yoke, salvation e.g. Mat. 11:28; 23:37-38 \*use of feminine metaphor to match *Proverbs*; Jn. 7:37.
    2. Jesus’ wisdom is superior to the wisest Solomon (Lk. 11:32) and supremely confounds (Lk. 2:46-47 cf. vv. 40, 52).
    3. Innate authoritative wisdom (amazing wisdom) see Mk. 1:22 cf. 6:2; Mat. 7:28-29 cf. vv. 24-27 where Jesus affirms His own word as the ultimate authority upon which salvation hinges (Jn. 5:39-40).
    4. Christ is the “wisdom from God...” e.g. 1 Cor. 1:30-31 cf. Jer. 9:23.
    5. Re: **v. 10b**. In Christ is found “all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery...treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:2-3).
- d. Procurement: A syn-tactical metaphor: Another layer to this instructive, demonstrative, metaphorical acrostic is a military motif. Hence my wordplay on ‘syntax’ and ‘tactical.’ “Wolters has persuasively argued that the poem is an example of a heroic hymn, a poem that typically celebrates the victory of soldiers, but here is used to praise a “noble woman.”<sup>10</sup> In support of this, he points out that the description of the woman is permeated with allusions to her strength and also often uses explicitly military terminology to describe her”<sup>2</sup> This layer of genre would also describe Jesus’ triumphant conquest. Longman further summarized:

---

<sup>13</sup> Yoder, “Woman of Substance,” 446. See also Yoder’s fuller work, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*.

<sup>1</sup> Longman, T., III. (2006). *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs* (p. 540). Baker Academic.

<sup>10</sup> He does this without denying the poem’s connection to the genre of wisdom psalm. See Wolters, “Proverbs xxxi 10–31.”

<sup>2</sup> Longman, T., III. (2006). *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs* (pp. 539–540). Baker Academic.

“Lady Wisdom’s Repertoire” (Prov. 31:10-31)  
“Woman Wisdom’s Warrior Works”

Proverbs 12:4 has already introduced the phrase “noble woman” (cf. Ruth 3:11). The word “noble” (*ḥayil*) has military overtones but is not restricted to military use. The basic meaning of the term is “strength” and “power,” and it “can be applied to a variety of people, including a warrior (powerful), a functionary (able), and a landowner (wealthy).”<sup>16</sup> While this indicates that “noble” here may not be military, the fact that the poem will associate military language with this woman in the following verses suggests that the composer intends the reader to recognize warrior imagery here. In what follows, we see a woman who is engaged in the battle of life, dealing with people and winning an advantage for her family.<sup>3</sup>

2. Proven (11-12)

- a. Trustworthy (11a) Utter faithfulness: As the supposed metaphorical husband can be vulnerable to his proven wife, we can be absolutely transparent and vulnerable to our perfectly faithful Savior.
- b. Triumphant (11b) In the original Hebrew, the wording is striking. The term “plunder” (*šālāl*) refers to the spoils of warfare.<sup>18</sup> The idea of the verse seems to suggest that the woman is a warrior in the battle of life. She goes out and fights on behalf of her family and comes back with the victor’s spoils, which allow her family to thrive in the midst of the conflict.<sup>4</sup>
- c. Tenacious (12) doing such good all of her days.

3. Prosperous (13-21)

- a. Productive (13a) Resourceful and skilled.
- b. Pleasurable (13b) She sees her duties as purposed, privileged, and beneficial.
- c. Produce (14) Not only is she joyful to employ her skills, she “like the merchant ships” secures product for her family.
- d. Proactive (15) The early bird gets the ‘prey.’ The word often translated ‘food’ is a “word from the realm of hunting [and] suggests violence or struggle.”<sup>5</sup> She, as it were, arises early to pounce upon that which she secures for her family.
- e. Profits (16) Losing no opportunity, she is an industrious entrepreneur investing wisely, not unlike the parable of the talents (Mat. 25:14ff.).
- f. Perseverance (17-19) Fervor & Fortitude: with an endless supply of energy (17), she rises early (15) and stays up late (18b). Staying proactive, she loads the spindle wheel w/ the distaff (19). A weapon of warfare? “Anat, the warrior goddess of Ugarit, used her distaff and whorl as a weapon. Again, this may underline the warrior imagery, which laces this description of the ‘noble woman.’”<sup>6</sup> She wields the preemptive weapon of the “spindle-whorl” (*pelek/pālek*) is the flywheel of a stick<sup>7</sup> to conquer unpreparedness and want.
- g. Preservation (20-21)
  - i. For Others (20) Because of her preemptive efforts and wisdom, she is able to secure necessary sustenance for others.

---

<sup>16</sup> NIDOTTE 2:116–26. For the most extensive study of the word, advocating the translation “woman of substance,” see Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*.

<sup>3</sup> Longman, T., III. (2006). *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs* (p. 542). Baker Academic.

<sup>18</sup> See NIDOTTE 4:128–29, though, regrettably, this article does not discuss the word’s occurrence here in Prov. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Longman, T., III. (2006). *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs* (p. 543). Baker Academic.

<sup>5</sup> Longman, T., III. (2006). *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs* (p. 544). Baker Academic.

<sup>6</sup> Longman, T., III. (2006). *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs* (p. 545). Baker Academic.

<sup>7</sup> Longman, T., III. (2006). *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs* (p. 545). Baker Academic.

“Lady Wisdom’s Repertoire” (Prov. 31:10-31)

“Woman Wisdom’s Warrior Works”

- ii. For Family (21) Fearless of the certain challenges of the future, she can rest easy knowing her preparations have provided insulation from the bitter cold (and other anticipated challenges).
4. Propriety (22-27)
- a. Prosperous (22-24)
    - i. Because of her wise dealings, she is able to cloth herself in fine product (22).
    - ii. Because of her propriety, her husband is well respected/envied (23).
    - iii. Because of her industrious skills, she is able to provide to merchants thus increasing her profits (24).
  - b. Prominence (25-26)
    - i. V. 25. Adorned with stability and esteem not unlike the necklace of love and faithfulness (3:3), the crown of knowledge (14:18), blessings on the head of the righteous (loose ref. (10:6), and crown of wealth (14:24). Her apparel is a display of virtue.
    - ii. V. 26. Apparent to her peers is the general wisdom of her speech and the nature of her revelatory counsel. “The ambiguous genitive, *torat hesed*, is interpreted as an attributive genitive like ‘true [not false] instruction’”<sup>8</sup> Hence Longman’s translation is: “and covenantal instruction is on her lips.”<sup>9</sup>
  - c. Proactive (27) Perhaps a continuation of military motif albeit a bit softer. The term “watches” signifies a watchtower (look out post) like that of Ezek. 33:7.
5. Praiseworthy (28-31)
- a. V. 28. Her goodness, beauty, and wisdom is seen first in her own household.
  - b. V. 29. Lady Wisdom excels all others as her actions, attributes, and attitude come from her covenantal relationship with the LORD cf. v. 30.
  - c. V. 30. Another concluding antithetical parallel. This one contrasting the often coveted charm and beauty with faith in YHWH. Charm is flattering and beauty is fleeting. From whom our praise comes is what really matters. God will not flatter, deceive, nor abandon those who put their trust in Him. The end beatitude is heard in the words of our LORD Himself; “Well done good and faithful servant” (Mat. 25:23). Furthermore, this is illustrated in the parable of the talents, to which we have already referred re: Lady Wisdom’s practices.
  - d. V. 31. God will not only not withhold the fruits of earnest labor, He will see to it that such labor will be rewarded, displayed, and magnified – and though this will apply to the faithful who fear the LORD, it can only, truly, and ultimately apply to the LORD Himself at the “gates” of the mount of God. See Ps. 24 where the “gates” are to praise the conquering warrior King v. 7, who has ascended the ‘hill of the LORD’ via His pure heart and hands vv. 3-4. And there will all the praise be directed at the King of Glory vv. 8-10. For He alone came from God and ascended back to God via performing perfect wisdom, works, and righteousness.

---

<sup>8</sup> Waltke, B. K. (2005). *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 15–31*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

<sup>9</sup> Longman, T., III. (2006). *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs* (p. 546). Baker Academic.