

Proverbs 31:1–31

The Words of King Lemuel

The last chapter of Proverbs begins with this introduction:

“The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him.” (Proverbs 31:1, NKJV)

These are not Lemuel’s words originally—they are the words of his mother, given to him in the form of counsel. Some scholars believe that “Lemuel” may have been another name for Solomon, and that these words could have been Bathsheba’s advice to her son. Whether or not that’s true, what we have here is timeless wisdom from a godly mother to her son, preparing him for leadership and life.

Counsel for a King (vv. 2–9)

The first section is a warning against two dangers that can destroy any leader: immorality and intoxication.

- Immorality: *“Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings”* (v. 3). Sexual sin has ruined rulers, nations, families, and ministries. A man called to lead must guard his purity, because moral failure undermines trust and weakens authority.
- Intoxication: *“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink”* (v. 4). A leader must think clearly and exercise sound judgment. Anything that clouds the mind—whether alcohol, drugs, or other addictive influences—puts others at risk. Leadership is a sacred trust, and a clouded mind cannot rule wisely.

Instead of dulling the mind, a leader must use his voice to defend the weak:

“Open your mouth for the speechless... open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy” (vv. 8–9).

Practical Application: In our homes, workplaces, and communities, we are all leaders at some level. God calls us to live with clarity, not compromise, so that our influence brings blessing rather than harm. Ask yourself: *Am I living with a clear mind and a pure heart, so that my words and actions can help others rather than mislead them?*

The Portrait of a Virtuous Woman (vv. 10–31)

The second section describes the qualities of a woman who is truly valuable in God’s sight. She is called a “virtuous woman”—a word that carries the idea of strength, integrity, and excellence. Her worth is said to be “far above rubies” (v. 10).

This description is not meant to overwhelm women with impossible expectations, but to highlight the beauty of godliness expressed in everyday life. Notice the balance of her qualities:

1. Trustworthy (v. 11–12): Her husband can fully trust her. She seeks his good, not his harm.
2. Diligent (vv. 13–19): She works hard in providing for her household, showing initiative and wisdom in business and daily responsibilities.
3. Compassionate (v. 20): She opens her hand to the poor and needy. True virtue is not selfish but generous.
4. Prepared (v. 21): She provides for her family in advance, showing foresight and care.
5. Honorable (vv. 22–25): She is clothed with strength and dignity. Her husband is respected partly because of her character.
6. Wise and Kind (v. 26): Her speech is marked by wisdom and kindness, not harshness or gossip.
7. Faithful (vv. 27–29): She manages her household well. Her children and husband rise up and bless her.

The chapter concludes with this striking truth:

“Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.” (v. 30)

True beauty is not outward but inward—rooted in reverence for God. Outward charm and physical beauty fade with time, but godliness grows more radiant.

Practical Application: For women, this chapter offers encouragement to cultivate character rather than chase appearance. For men, it is a reminder to value and cherish a wife not merely for her looks, but for her faith and godliness. For young people, it provides a guide for what to look for in a future spouse.

Closing Reflection

The book of Proverbs ends with the image of a godly woman whose life blesses her family and honors her Lord. In many ways, she embodies the wisdom that has been celebrated throughout the book. Wisdom, after all, is not just abstract—it is lived out in daily choices, relationships, and responsibilities.

Personal Challenge:

- If you are a parent, ask yourself how you are shaping the character of your children through both instruction and example.
- If you are married, give thanks for your spouse, and look for ways to honor and encourage them.
- If you are single, let Proverbs 31 guide your values—whether in the kind of person you seek to marry or the kind of person you aspire to become.

Above all, remember that the greatest beauty is the beauty of holiness, and the highest calling is to live in the fear of the Lord.