

## **Dr. August Konkel, Proverbs, Session 21, In Praise of Wisdom, Proverbs 31:10-31 Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Konkel, Proverbs, Session 21, In Praise of Wisdom, Proverbs 31:10-31, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This lecture excerpt from Dr. August Konkel's "Praise of Wisdom" series focuses on Proverbs 31:10-31, a poem praising a virtuous woman. Konkel explains the poem's acrostic structure and its connection to the personification of wisdom found elsewhere in Proverbs. He contrasts the "virtuous woman" with the concept of folly, highlighting the importance of strong moral character and interdependence within families. The lecture emphasizes the poem's depiction of wisdom in action, contrasting it with the Western focus on individual independence. Finally, Konkel encourages listeners to view the poem as a practical example of the wisdom taught throughout the book of Proverbs.

**2. 10 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Konkel, Session 21 – Double click icon to play in Windows  
media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and  
click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms &  
Wisdom → Proverbs).**



**Konkel\_Prov\_Session  
21.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Konkel, Proverbs, Session 21, In Praise of Wisdom, Proverbs 31:10-31

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. August Konkel's lecture on Proverbs 31:10-31:

#### Briefing Document: Dr. August Konkel on Proverbs 31:10-31

##### Contextual Note:

- Dr. Konkel begins by noting the date, March 4, 2022, and the ongoing invasion of Ukraine, reflecting on his Ukrainian roots and the city of Kharkiv. This personal note highlights the reality of human events alongside the timeless wisdom of Proverbs.

##### Main Themes and Ideas:

##### 1. Acrostic Structure:

- Proverbs 31:10-31 is an acrostic poem, with each line beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This structure is also found in Psalm 119 and, to a lesser degree, in Proverbs 2. The acrostic structure adds a sense of completion and order to the poem.
- Quote: "An acrostic is used in various psalms... What an acrostic does is begin each successive line with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet."

##### 1. Personification of Wisdom:

- The poem about the virtuous woman is related to the personification of wisdom that appears earlier in Proverbs (chapters 1, 8, and 9), where wisdom is presented as a woman.
- Konkel argues that while the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 is *related* to the personification of wisdom, she should not be read *as if* she is a direct metaphor for wisdom.
- He proposes an antithesis: folly is personified as a "strange woman" while wisdom is personified as "Lady Wisdom." These concepts then have a real-life example in the "sensual woman" and "virtuous woman" respectively.

- Quote: "In fact, there are those who would read this poem as a personification of wisdom... Now, I think that we do have an allusion to Woman Wisdom, but I don't think that Proverbs 31 is to be read as if these were all metaphors about wisdom itself."

#### 1. **The "Virtuous Woman" as a Real Example:**

- The virtuous woman represents a real-life example of someone embodying wisdom, not merely a theoretical concept. She is a competent, responsible person, not a queen or someone detached from everyday life.
- She is characterized by the Hebrew word "Hayil," meaning strength. This strength refers to both moral character and practical abilities.
- Quote: "This woman of strength is not some queen who is in a palace whose task it is to be a consort to the king to represent the king in his various different kinds of appearances. It has nothing to do with that. This is a real person, the kind of person that you meet every day..."

#### 1. **The Complementary Psalms:**

- Konkel connects the description of the virtuous woman to the idea of a "strong person" found in various Psalms.
- He highlights Psalm 1, where the "blessed person" is someone who meditates on God's law, leading to fruitfulness.
- He also discusses Psalm 15 (integrity, fear of the Lord), and especially the parallel between Psalms 111 and 112: Psalm 111 is about praising God, while Psalm 112 gives a character description of the kind of person who does that, similar to the traits of the virtuous woman.
- The virtues of a strong person include understanding relationships, trusting God, and being submissive to God. These manifest in justice, righteousness, and equity, also summarized in Proverbs 1 and 2.

#### 1. **Manifestation in Daily Activities:**

- The characteristics of wisdom (justice, righteousness, and equity) are displayed in ordinary, daily activities of the virtuous woman, such as managing her household, making provision for her family, preparing food, and making clothes, in addition to her entrepreneurial activity.

- Quote: "It's all about the activities that would occupy someone who is responsible for those around them... the preparation of their food, in the wearing of their clothes, which would require other kinds of activities, like she might have to contemplate a field and buy it."

#### 1. **Family as the Core Unit:**

- The family unit, with a strong husband and wife, is presented as the way God designed human interaction to operate in the world. This is not to exclude single people, who also play roles in families (Konkel uses his brother as an example), but the family is the representation of how people represent God.
- Quote: "But the fact is, then in the human order, the way God made things to operate, we are families, and that's how we represent God."
- Both male and female represent God's image, not as individuals but collectively as people, especially within the family unit.
- Quote: "When God said we are to be his image and have dominion over all creation, it was clear that we do that as male and female. In other words, not do as individuals, but rather we do that collectively as people."

#### 1. **Proverbs 31 as a Conclusion:**

- The poem in Proverbs 31 provides a concrete example of the wisdom taught throughout the book. It contrasts with the pursuit of power, wealth, and individual independence, all themes that would conflict with "wisdom"
- Quote: "It's a stark contrast to the pursuit of power and control, a stark contrast to the pursuit of wealth, a stark contrast to individual independence."
- Konkel argues that Western society is overly focused on individual rights, overlooking the necessity of interdependence, both in society and, most significantly, within family relationships.
- The virtuous woman is an example of interdependence in family.

### 1. Application:

- The virtuous woman is an example of how someone embodying wisdom would act. The reader is intended to see the poem as an example of how to live justly, righteously, and equitably, learning the fear of the Lord.
- Quote: "...read it as a way of an example in one person of all the kinds of things that you have learned as a wise person, listening to the teacher who has written down for us all these things that we may learn. Justice, righteousness, equity, and learn the fear of the Lord."

**Key Takeaway:** Proverbs 31:10-31 is not simply a poem about an ideal woman. It's a carefully placed conclusion to the book of Proverbs, using the example of a "virtuous woman" to exemplify and reinforce the overarching themes of wisdom. It challenges the reader to see wisdom not as abstract theory, but as a lived reality expressed in everyday actions and relationships, particularly within the family, and to see how these things are interconnected to the fundamental human need for interdependence.

## 4. Study Guide: Konkell, Proverbs, Session 21, In Praise of Wisdom, Proverbs 31:10-31

### Proverbs 31: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is an acrostic, and how is it used in Proverbs 31?
2. What is the significance of the virtuous woman in the context of the book of Proverbs?
3. How does Konkell differentiate between the personification of wisdom and folly and their real-life representations?
4. What does the Hebrew word *Hayil* mean, and how does it relate to the virtuous woman?
5. How does Psalm 1 describe the person of *Hayil*, and how does it connect to the concept of wisdom?
6. According to Psalm 15, what specific characteristics define a person of integrity?
7. How does Psalm 112 serve as a parallel to the description of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31?
8. How do the activities of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 demonstrate justice, righteousness, and equity?
9. What societal critique does Konkell offer regarding the concept of individual independence?
10. According to Konkell, how does the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 serve as a culmination of the wisdom taught throughout the book of Proverbs?

#### Answer Key

1. An acrostic is a literary device in which each line or verse begins with a successive letter of the alphabet. In Proverbs 31, the poem about the virtuous woman is structured as an acrostic using the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

2. The virtuous woman serves as the culmination of the book of Proverbs, providing a real-life example of wisdom in action. She is not just a literal woman, but an example of someone who embodies the teachings of the book.
3. Konkel explains that folly and wisdom are personified as women; Folly is a boisterous woman in the streets and wisdom is a lady with a great banquet. But the real-life representations of these concepts are the sensuous woman and the loyal wife, respectively.
4. *Hayil* means "strength" and refers to both physical strength and strength of character. It describes someone of strong moral character, such as the virtuous woman, who is not easily swayed.
5. Psalm 1 describes the person of *Hayil* as someone whose mind is controlled by Torah, and they are like a tree yielding fruit by a stream, which aligns with the idea of wisdom bearing fruit in life.
6. Psalm 15 describes a person of integrity as someone who is trustworthy, fears the Lord, avoids slander and financial abuse, and is honest with their neighbor.
7. Psalm 112, like Proverbs 31, describes a person who embodies qualities like justice, righteousness, and equity, highlighting the practical ways wisdom should manifest in everyday actions and relationships.
8. The virtuous woman demonstrates justice, righteousness, and equity through her responsible daily activities, her provision for her family, and her contributions to the community through making and selling goods.
9. Konkel criticizes the Western emphasis on individual independence, arguing that humans are inherently interdependent, especially within family relationships and communities, and highlights the pandemic to prove his point.
10. The virtuous woman serves as a model for how the principles of justice, righteousness, equity, and the fear of the Lord (all taught throughout Proverbs) should be embodied in a practical way. She is a real-life depiction of wisdom.

## Essay Questions

1. Analyze the use of personification in Proverbs, specifically focusing on the representations of wisdom and folly. How do these personifications contribute to the book's overall message?
2. Compare and contrast the portrayal of the "virtuous woman" in Proverbs 31 with other female figures in the Old Testament. What unique message does Proverbs 31 communicate about the role of women and their relationship to wisdom?
3. Discuss the importance of the concept of *Hayil* (strength) in the Old Testament. How is this concept applied to both men and women, and what does it signify about the characteristics of a person of wisdom?
4. Examine the ways in which Proverbs 31 can be interpreted both literally and figuratively. What are the strengths and limitations of each approach, and how does it affect our understanding of the text?
5. Evaluate the relevance of the values and virtues displayed by the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 for contemporary society. In what ways do these principles still speak to modern challenges and aspirations?



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Acrostic:** A literary composition in which the first letter of each line or verse forms a word or a pattern.
- **Personification:** The attribution of human characteristics to something nonhuman.
- **Hayil:** A Hebrew word meaning "strength," referring to both physical and moral strength of character.
- **Torah:** The Hebrew word for "instruction" or "law," often referring to the first five books of the Old Testament.
- **Folly:** A lack of good sense or normal judgment, can be personified as a loud woman in the streets calling to people.
- **Justice:** Fairness and equity in the way people are treated.
- **Righteousness:** Moral correctness or behavior in accordance with divine laws or moral principles.
- **Equity:** Fairness and impartiality; treating everyone justly without bias.
- **Interdependence:** The state of being mutually reliant on each other, where the actions of one impact the others.

## 5. FAQs on Konkel, Proverbs, Session 21, In Praise of Wisdom, Proverbs 31:10-31, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on Proverbs 31 and the Concept of Wisdom

- **What is the significance of Proverbs 31:10-31 being placed at the end of the Book of Proverbs?** The poem about the "virtuous woman" in Proverbs 31 serves as the conclusion to the entire book. It's not just a standalone piece about an ideal woman; it is deliberately placed to exemplify the concept of wisdom in practical, everyday life. The virtuous woman embodies the qualities and characteristics that the book of Proverbs has been teaching about throughout, making her a living representation of wisdom.
- **Is the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 a personification of Wisdom itself?** While the virtuous woman shares similarities with the personification of Wisdom in other parts of Proverbs (like chapters 1, 8, and 9), she isn't merely a metaphor for wisdom. Instead, she represents an *actual* example of a person embodying wisdom in daily life. She is a tangible representation of the abstract concept of wisdom being practiced through her daily actions and character. Think of the contrast with the personification of folly, in chapter 9, as a boisterous woman; this personification is also about an actual *type* of person.
- **What does the Hebrew word "Hayil" mean in the context of the "virtuous woman"?** The term "Hayil," translated as "virtuous" or "noble," actually means "strong." This strength isn't just physical; it encompasses moral character, competence, and resilience. It describes someone with a strong, unwavering commitment to doing what is right and good, and who is not easily swayed by negative influences. This word is also used to describe men as well, as the author indicates he used the term to honor his wife.
- **How does Proverbs 31 contrast with the pursuit of individual independence and power?** Proverbs 31 emphasizes the importance of interdependence within families and communities, directly contrasting the modern Western focus on individual rights. The virtuous woman is deeply integrated into her family and society, demonstrating that our greatest interdependence lies within personal relationships and collective well-being. This perspective is particularly relevant to considering how essential services during a pandemic highlighted our reliance on one another for our basic needs.

- **What are some of the specific qualities of the "virtuous woman" that exemplify wisdom?** The virtuous woman demonstrates many qualities of wisdom such as industry, responsibility, loyalty, and care for her family and household. She is skilled in domestic tasks, engaged in business, and gives to the poor. Her husband praises her, and she is recognized for her worth. She is not simply performing mundane tasks, but rather demonstrates how wisdom manifests in the most ordinary parts of life. Her actions contribute to the harmony and well-being of her family and community.
- **How does the structure of Proverbs 31, as an acrostic poem, affect its interpretation?** The acrostic structure, where each line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, adds a sense of completeness and meticulous care. It is a stylistic choice found in other Psalms (such as Psalm 119), suggesting a carefully crafted and intentional expression of a significant ideal. This structure underscores the importance and thoroughness of the qualities described within the poem.
- **How do Psalms 1, 15, 111, and 112 connect to the concept of the "virtuous woman" and the ideal of wisdom?** These Psalms provide a broader context for understanding the virtuous person. Psalm 1 describes the blessed individual who delights in God's law, emphasizing the importance of the mind and lifelong learning. Psalm 15 describes the character of the person who dwells with God; as one with integrity, who knows the fear of the Lord and treats others with respect. Psalms 111 and 112 describe the person who praises God, and in turn receives God's praise; furthermore, they detail what that type of person looks like. Parallels between Psalm 112 and the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 highlights that both have a strong moral character, trust in God, and exhibit this through daily life. They serve to further develop the idea of what a life led by wisdom and character looks like.
- **How does Proverbs 31 challenge traditional interpretations of roles and duties within the family?** Proverbs 31 does not present the virtuous woman as a passive, submissive figure, but as a capable, industrious, and influential member of her household. She manages business affairs and makes significant decisions, demonstrating that wisdom can manifest in both domestic and entrepreneurial activities. Her husband, in turn, praises her for her qualities and recognizes her contributions to the family's well-being. This portrayal challenges simplistic ideas about traditional gender roles, and suggests a more collaborative relationship within the family.