

Dr. August Konkell, Proverbs, Session 21, In Praise of Wisdom, Proverbs 31:10-31 Podcast Audio Overview

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All right, let's dive in. Today we're going deep with the Virtuous Woman of Proverbs 31. You know that famous passage, the one that wrapped up the entire book of Proverbs? Yeah, it's like the grand finale.

You find it in Proverbs 31.10-31. It brings together kind of all the wisdom nuggets from before. Now, before we get to the poem itself, this source we have mentions a tie to Kharkiv and the war in Ukraine. It seems a little out of place.

How does that connect to Proverbs? Well, the source is a lecture by Dr. August Konkell back in March 2022, just as the war was, well, escalating. And he wore this tie during the lecture, a tie he'd gotten in Kharkiv, which at the time was under intense bombardment. Whoa, talk about ancient wisdom meeting modern conflict.

That's got to be a heavy thing to carry. It really is. But it shows you how those ancient words still resonate even in the midst of turmoil.

But back to the poem itself, people call her the Virtuous Woman. Is she a real historical figure? Yeah, that's what I was wondering. Is this like a biography or something? Not exactly.

Not a specific person, more of a representation of an ideal, like wisdom personified and even virtuous. They translate that from the Hebrew *heil*, which actually means strong. So it's less about being goody-two-shoes, more about image strength.

I'm liking this already. But this source also says the poem is an acrostic. What's that about? An acrostic poem.

It's where the first letter of each line spells out a word or a phrase, like, you know, Psalm 119 is a really long example. It's a literary device; it adds artistry and makes it intentional. So each line is like a puzzle piece about this strong woman.

This is getting good. But Proverbs also talks about a foolish woman, right? Like, is this a battle between good and evil? Think of it more as personification. Proverbs uses these images of two women, Lady Wisdom and Dame Folly, to make those abstract ideas, well, more relatable.

So the strong woman shows us what wisdom looks like in action, and Dame Folly shows us what to avoid. That's clever. But what makes this strong woman so strong? What sets her apart? She's not just passively wise.

This is a woman of action. It describes her managing her household, providing for her family, even engaging in business. Wow.

She's not just thinking about life. She's out there doing it. I see a theme here.

Wisdom isn't just knowing stuff. It's about doing stuff. Exactly.

Applying that knowledge in practical ways, creating a good life, a meaningful life. And this active wisdom even goes into her relationships. Her husband is praised as a leader in the community, which suggests she supports him and gives him strength.

So it's not just about her, but how she strengthens others. Her impact goes beyond just herself. I like that.

This source mentions her being like the mother of King Lemuel. Who's that? Yeah. Right before the poem in Proverbs 31.1, they mention King Lemuel briefly.

Some scholars think he was a non-Israelite king. And the poem is like his mother's advice on how to rule wisely. Oh, interesting.

So this wisdom is for everyone: housewives, kings, whoever. It's about leading a life that matters no matter what you do. But speaking of connections, this source mentions a link to Psalm 112.

What's the connection? Psalm 112 is another acrostic poem. And it describes a righteous person, someone who's truly happy and blessed. And the cool thing is the qualities it lists, like righteousness, compassion, generosity.

They're so similar to our strong woman. Hold on. So these two poems from different parts of the Bible are showing us the same thing, a picture of a truly good life.

That's pretty neat. Yeah. It really highlights those themes of wisdom, strength, and right living all through scripture.

Plus, it's not just about individual character. It's about how that character affects the community. You know, Dr. Konkel makes a good point about that in his lecture about how the pandemic really showed us how much we depend on each other, especially essential workers.

Yeah, that makes sense. We rely on each other more than we think. Exactly.

And it goes on to say that this interconnectedness is strongest within our families, our closest relationships. He uses the example of his own brother who's single, doesn't have a family of his own, but he acts as a father figure, a source of support for lots of people. Wow.

That's really beautiful. It shows we can all have those qualities, that strength, that wisdom. It doesn't matter your relationship status or family structure.

We all have a role to play in supporting each other. But I'm curious if this poem is about how to live; what about the opposite? What happens when we don't live wisely? Where does

dame folly take us? That's where the contrast between the wise woman and the foolish woman becomes really important. Throughout Proverbs, there are all these warnings about folly, and it's often shown as this seductive figure, but dangerous.

Like those sirens in Greek mythology, luring sailors with their songs, appealing but deadly. Yeah, that's a great analogy. The foolish woman, she's all about those choices that seem good at the time, but they lead you astray.

Maybe they offer quick pleasure or easy gain, but in the long run, the consequences are terrible. So we've got the strong woman with her wisdom and the foolish woman showing us those dangerous traps, but how do we know which path we're on? What are some signs that we might be getting a little foolish? That's a great question, and Proverbs gives us some hints. One big sign is a lack of self-control, maybe in your finances, like spending too much or getting into debt, or in how you treat your body through unhealthy habits, maybe even addictions.

It's about giving in to what you want right now without thinking about the consequences later. Like that marshmallow test, can you resist the temptation now for a bigger reward later? Exactly. Another sign of folly is not caring about others.

Proverbs keep reminding us to treat people with respect, with kindness, with justice. When we start putting our own selfish wants above the well-being of those around us, that's a big warning sign. So if you're always cutting corners, taking advantage of people, being inconsiderate, that's a sign you need a wisdom checkup.

For sure. And speaking of checkups, Proverbs also talks about getting wise counsel, being open to correction. The foolish person is often arrogant and refuses to listen to advice.

It's that my way or the highway attitude, which usually leads to trouble. You got it. Humility is key.

We need to admit we don't have all the answers and be willing to learn from others, whether it's mentors, friends, or even therapists. That makes so much sense. We all need a little guidance sometimes, but this source points out how the strong woman is different from the whole pursuit of power and wealth.

You know, how so? It's subtle, but the poem doesn't show her as obsessed with status or material things. Her focus is using her abilities to benefit her family and her community. Yeah, she's productive, but her wealth comes from her wise actions, not the other way around.

So it's not that wealth is bad. It's about why you want it and how you use it. Exactly.

The foolish way to look at wealth is that it's all about you using others for your own gain, putting your security in things instead of relationships, and living right. Like the difference between building a business to help people versus exploiting people to get rich. Perfect analogy.

Proverbs is full of warnings against greed, dishonesty, and abusing power. Those are the marks of folly, and they always lead to ruin. Okay, so we know what not to do, but let's go back to our strong woman.

How can we be more like her today? I mean, I don't live in ancient Israel. I haven't spun wool in, well, ever. One big takeaway is that wisdom is active.

It's not just about knowing stuff. It's about doing stuff, making good choices, living with purpose. Remember the strong woman; she's always working, planning, engaging with the world.

Doesn't wait for things to happen. She makes them happen. Knowledge is power, but only if you use it, right? I'm starting to see how this old wisdom applies to my life now.

Exactly. Another important lesson is that strength comes from relationships. Our strong woman is part of a close family, and she uses her abilities to support them and lift them up.

It's about building each other up, not tearing each other down. That's so important, especially today. It's easy to get caught up in competition, comparing yourself to everyone.

Absolutely. And lastly, Proverbs makes it clear: legacy matters. What the strong woman does has a good impact on everyone around her and makes us think about our own legacy.

What impact are we having on others? What will we be remembered for? Wow, that's powerful. It's not just about living for today. It's about making choices that will last.

That's inspiring. It really makes you think about what you want to leave behind, you know, not just for your family, but for everyone. It's a lot to live up to, but only something to aim for.

But before we go too far down that road, we're kind of running out of time for this deep dive. It's true. Time flies when you're exploring ancient wisdom.

It really does. But before we wrap up, any last thoughts on this strong woman? What can we learn from her about living wisely? Well, you were saying earlier how Proverbs often uses these contrasting characters. We've talked a lot about the strong woman, but I'm kind of curious: who's the opposite? What does foolishness look like in real life? Maybe that'll help us avoid, you know, those pitfalls.

Good question. Like the shadow side of the poem, the path we don't want to take. I imagine she'd be, I don't know, maybe obsessed with appearances.

Or manipulative, always putting herself first. Yeah, someone driven by selfish ambition, always going for the quick win, even if it means, like, tricking people or using them. Someone who values stuff more than people.

And probably lives for the moment, right? Wastes their money, doesn't take care of themselves, messes up relationships, and doesn't even think about the consequences. Exactly. Maybe they're always chasing trends, you know, trying to fit in instead of just being themselves.

Proverbs 29:1 says, "A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back." That restraint, that ability to think ahead and consider the impact of your actions. That's what makes someone strong.

Wow, that verse really gets to the heart of it. It's like choosing the easy way, the foolish woman's way, instead of the lasting reward, the strong way. And that choice, it affects everyone, not just you.

That's the big lesson here. This poem, it's not some old rule book for women. It's for anyone who wants to live a life that matters, that has purpose, that makes a difference.

Doesn't matter who you are, what your situation is. It's about building up, not tearing down. Leaving behind a legacy of strength, wisdom, and goodness.

Well said. And on that note, it's time for us to come up from this deep dive. But listeners, as you go about your own lives, remember that strong woman from Proverbs 31 and all that wisdom she shows us.

Choose strength over folly, action over just sitting around, and love over selfishness. What kind of a legacy will you create? A thing to think about. Thanks for joining us on the deep dive.