

# Praise of Wisdom: Proverbs 31:10–31

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## Keywords

Proverbs 31, August Konkel, Virtuous woman, Hayil, Acrostic poem, Lady Wisdom, Psalm 112, Family stewardship, Interdependence, Righteousness

## Abstract

This lecture examines Proverbs 31:10–31 as the deliberate acrostic conclusion to the book of Proverbs, celebrating the virtuous woman as the practical, real-life embodiment of Lady Wisdom introduced in earlier chapters. Dr. August Konkel analyzes the Hebrew concept of hayil—defined as moral character, integrity, and spiritual strength—and explores its thematic connections to Old Testament passages, particularly Psalm 112. The source demonstrates how divine wisdom is operationalized through industrious family stewardship, domestic faithfulness, and communal responsibility rather than royal status or isolated individualism. Ultimately, the text highlights the fundamental human interdependence inherent in creation and emphasizes living out righteousness, justice, and equity within daily relationships.

## Outline

### I. Introduction and Contextual Framing

#### A. Speaker and Session Overview

1. Lecturer: Dr. August Konkel
2. Series: Teaching on the Book of Proverbs (Session 21)
3. Focus Passage: Praise of Wisdom, Proverbs 31:10–31

#### B. Personal Contextual Reflection

1. Historical backdrop of the lecture (March 4, 2022 invasion of Ukraine)
2. Personal ancestral connections to Ukraine and the city of Kharkiv

#### C. The Role of Proverbs 31:10–31 in the Canon

1. Popularly recognized as the poem of the virtuous woman
2. Intentionally positioned as the concluding seal to the entire Book of Proverbs

### II. Literary Form and Personification of Wisdom

#### A. Acrostic Structure of the Poem

1. Definition: Successive lines starting with consecutive Hebrew alphabet letters (Aleph to Tav)
2. 22-line structure reflecting total completeness

3. Canonical comparisons: Psalm 119, Psalm 111, Psalm 112, and Proverbs 2 structural parallels
4. Function of acrostics: Association of ideas expressing thoroughness of instruction

#### B. Relationship to Lady Wisdom

1. Early personifications in Proverbs:
  - a. Proverbs 1: Wisdom calling out in the public square
  - b. Proverbs 8: Wisdom as God's master craftsman in creation
  - c. Proverbs 9: Wisdom hosting a grand banquet
2. Proverbs 31 as the practical manifestation of Lady Wisdom in daily human life

### III. The Hebrew Concept of Hayil (Virtuous/Strong)

#### A. Linguistic Meaning of Hayil

1. Core definition: Strength, capacity, capability, or valor
2. Dimensions of strength:
  - a. Physical strength and stamina
  - b. Moral integrity and spiritual resilience against wrong influence

#### B. Universal Application of Hayil

1. Applied to both men and women across Old Testament narratives
2. Highest compliment of human character and moral strength

#### C. The Contrast between Wisdom and Folly

1. Abstract Personification: Lady Wisdom vs. Woman Folly (Proverbs 9)
2. Real-Life Embodiment: The Virtuous Woman (loyal partner) vs. The Foreign/Sensuous Woman (folly)

### IV. Canonical Parallels in the Book of Psalms

#### A. Psalm 1: The Character of the Blessed Person

1. Generic application to all humanity (blessed is the person)
2. Mind governed by instruction (Torah) day and night
3. Metaphor of the tree planted by streams of water yielding fruit (cf. Proverbs 3:18; 11:30)

#### B. Psalm 15: Explicit Ethical Traits

1. Integrity, honesty, and reverent fear of the Lord
2. Absence of slander, reproach, or financial exploitation

#### C. Psalms 111 and 112: The Acrostic Parallel

1. Psalm 111: Acrostic of praise (barak) and honor to God
2. Psalm 112: Precise acrostic parallel to Proverbs 31 describing the person blessed by God
3. Key practical virtues: Justice, righteousness, and equity in daily living

### V. Practical Expression of Wisdom in the Household

#### A. Everyday Responsibilities over Royal Status

1. The woman of Hayil is not a distant, passive palace queen
2. Real-life competence in ordinary, essential domestic stewardship

#### B. Economic Enterprise and Industry

1. Procurement and preparation of food and garments
2. Working with spinning rod and distaff (textile production)
3. Financial acumen: evaluating real estate, purchasing fields, and trading with merchants

#### C. Marital Partnership and Social Leadership

1. Unwavering loyalty to her husband and mutual trust
2. The husband's role in community leadership and reconciliation at the city gate

### **VI. Theological Implications: Creation Order and Interdependence**

#### A. Creation Intent (Genesis 2)

1. Human beings bear God's image and exercise stewardship as male and female in covenantal community
2. The family household as the core social unit for cultivating wisdom

#### B. Integration of All Persons

1. Integration of single individuals into broader family structures (personal narrative illustration)
2. Community responsibility to foster belonging for all people

#### C. Critique of Modern Individualism

1. Modern Western fixation on individual rights vs. biblical interdependence
2. Global lessons from hardship (e.g., pandemic essential services proving inescapable human interconnectedness)

#### D. Conclusion of Proverbs

1. Living out the fear of the Lord through practical moral integrity
2. True wisdom realized through justice, righteousness, equity, and faithful service