

The Husband's Perfect Wife

Proverbs 31:10-31

INTRODUCTION

- A. A new widow was agonizing over what inscription to place on her husband's tombstone. She finally decided on these two: "*Rest in Peace—Until We Meet Again.*"
1. I cannot speak for you other men, but I know personally that it's my wife who brings peace & tranquility to my life. I cannot fathom enduring the struggles I've faced this past year without her by my side.
 2. Someone who knew the peace & tranquility wives can bring wrote these words: "If you are for pleasure, marry. If you prize rosy health, marry. A good wife is heaven's last best gift to a man; his angel of mercy; minister of graces innumerable; his gem of many virtues; his box of jewels; her voice, his sweetest music; her smiles, his brightest day; her kiss, the guardian of innocence; her arms, the pale of his safety; the balm of his health; the balsam of his life; her industry, his surest wealth; her economy, his safest steward; her lips, his faithful counselors...and her prayers, the ablest advocates of heaven's blessing on his head."
- B. The author of this morning's text knew well the peace & tranquility wives bring.
1. READ TEXT.
 2. Chapter 31 was not composed by Solomon.
 - a. "The words of King Lemeul. An oracle that his mother taught him" (v 1).
 - 1) We do not know who this King Lemeul was; this is the only time he is mentioned in Scripture.
 - 2) Of course, King Lemeul's identity is irrelevant, for God, through his Spirit, gave that king's mother important words we need to hear.
 - b. In my mind, the most interesting aspect of King Lemeul is that these words are not originally his; they were taught to him by his mother.
 - c. It is, therefore, quite likely that this morning's text was taught to King Lemeul in order to prepare him for marriage.
 - 1) The king's mother wanted her son to marry just the right woman & used this poem to teach her son what the ideal woman was like.
 - 2) That seems more likely when you realize that this poem is an acrostic, each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
 - a) The poem, therefore, would be quite easy for Lemeul to remember.
 - b) When he was courting a girl, he would know this poem & could see how well that girl measured up to the ideal woman.
- C. This morning, we want to explore "THE HUSBAND'S PERFECT WIFE."
1. Specifically this morning, we want to see how a husband sees his PERFECT WIFE.
 2. The husband sees the PERFECT WIFE as PREDICTABLE, PROFITABLE, & PRAISEWORTHY.

THE HUSBAND'S PERFECT WIFE IS PREDICTABLE, vv 11-12

- A. Some things in this world are simply predictable—they follow a set pattern.
1. I know that—unless the Lord comes again—the sun will come up in the morning. It always has & always will until this world is no more.
 2. Furthermore, I know that winter follows fall just as surely as summer follows spring. It has always been that way & will be that way from now until the Judgment.
- B. King Lemuel's mother taught him to see his PERFECT WIFE as predictable as the sun's rising & the season's changing:
1. "The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life."
 2. The husband sees his PERFECT WIFE as predictable, for he will have no lack of gain.
 - a. The KJV translates this as "he shall have no need of spoil."
 - 1) The Hebrew term literally means "spoil" or "plunder."
 - 2) The word is occasionally used in the Old Testament, as it seems to be here, to mean "ill-gotten gain." The idea of ill-gotten gain certainly goes with the idea in the first line of the husband's trust.
 - b. Therefore, the PERFECT WIFE is predictable, for she will make her living honestly.
 - 1) The husband can go & sit with the elders at the city gates without worrying over where his family's

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- money is coming from.
- 2) This is a predictable woman—if a situation arises where she could easily take advantage of someone & gain money, she'll refuse to do so every time.
- 3. The husband also sees his PERFECT WIFE as predictable, for she does him good and not harm all the days of her life.
 - a. The PERFECT WIFE never brings reproach upon her husband; she never embarrasses him; she never mistreats him.
 - b. This is a predictable woman—no matter what the situation, no matter how difficult, she will do right by her husband every single time.
- C. Because the PERFECT WIFE is so predictable, the heart of her husband trusts in her.
 - 1. He never has to worry about what she's doing when he's away—he knows that she will be doing the right thing.
 - 2. Sisters, just how predictable are you?
 - a. Does your husband know that you will always do right by him?
 - b. Does he know that you will never take advantage of anyone?
 - c. Does your husband know that even if he's not around that you will be doing what's right?
 - d. Are you doing right so much that it's predictable?
 - 3. The New Testament calls upon wives to be predictable:
 - a. "As the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands" (Eph 5:24). The PERFECT WIFE is predictable—she submits to her husband in everything.
 - b. "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct" (1 Pt 3:1-2). The PERFECT WIFE is predictable—she always has "respectful and pure conduct."
 - 4. Trust is so important in a marriage.
 - a. Marriages cannot survive without both spouses being able to trust one another.
 - b. I cannot imagine not being able to trust my spouse completely—
 - 1) When I was in school & had to go to Alabama for a week, what would that week have been like for me if I couldn't trust Tammy completely?
 - a) What if I had to worry that maybe she had her a boyfriend while I was away? What if I had to worry that she'd mistreat my kids?
 - b) But, Tammy so predictably does right that I had no worries.
 - 2) How predictable are we in doing the right thing?

THE HUSBAND'S PERFECT WIFE IS PROFITABLE, vv 13-27

- A. READ TEXT.
- B. The picture presented in these verses is one of a very shrewd businesswoman.
 - 1. She works & works & works to provide for her family.
 - 2. The intriguing part of this text is that it presents a working woman in a patriarchal society. Scripture only mentions a handful of women who worked in business.
 - a. Of course, Lydia was a "seller of purple goods" (Acts 16:14).
 - b. Both Aquila and Priscilla were "tentmakers by trade" (Acts 18:1-3).
 - c. Typically, women had no means of being self-sufficient. Thus, God gave some quite explicit instructions concerning marriage & providing for widows.
- C. What are we to make of this woman who worked so diligently in business?
 - 1. I think the appropriate question to ask is: "Why was this woman working in business?"
 - a. The passage makes that clear: "Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land" (v 23).
 - b. The PERFECT WIFE's husband was an elder of the land.
 - 1) The elders played an important role in ancient Israel.
 - a) According to the Law of Moses, they judged many types of cases & even carried out the death penalty in other cases.
 - b) Therefore, the PERFECT WIFE's husband is an important man who is playing a vital role for God's people. Because he sits at the city gates helping people fulfill God's Law, he is unable to financially support his wife.
 - 2) The poem makes clear that this isn't a man who is unconcerned with his wife or who doesn't care if she has food, clothing, & shelter. Rather, he is fulfilling an important, God-given role & his wife steps up and provides for the family.
 - 2. What application can we make for today?
 - a. Does this mean that we men should stay home & tell our wives to get jobs to support us?

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- 1) Personally, I've only known one family where there was such an arrangement.
- 2) Tammy & I became decent friends with another couple in the Lamaze class we took just before RJ was born.
 - a) She was the principal at one of the elementary schools in town and was making decent money; his income was nowhere near what hers was.
 - b) They decided that after the baby was born, she would go back to work & he would stay home to care for their daughter.
 - c) That worked for them. I could never have stood for Tammy to be the sole breadwinner & I'm sure many of you other guys feel the same way.
- b. It's important to notice that the PERFECT WIFE's husband doesn't sit at home all day expecting her to earn all the money. Rather, he's fulfilling his role & she's fulfilling hers.
3. I'm convinced that what we have in this passage is an ideal fulfillment of the purpose for which woman was created.
 - a. When Adam was alone in the Garden, God says, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gn 2:18).
 - 1) The Hebrew word for "helper" basically means "assistant."
 - 2) Woman was created to give assistance to the man, to help the man.
 - b. In this passage, the PERFECT WIFE is being her husband's assistant—she's working diligently so that he can serve as a city elder.
4. Sisters, are you a profitable woman, i.e., are you helping your husband?
 - a. Do you help your husband draw closer to God?
 - 1) It wasn't that long ago that Tammy & I were driving to Kentucky to get the boys.
 - 2) She got rather direct: "Justin, how's your spiritual life? How's your prayer life?" She's helping keep me on track.
 - b. Do you help your husband with the children?
 - 1) You might think I have that question backwards & think that I should ask if you get help from your husband with the children.
 - 2) But, do you help him keep from punishing too severely? Do you let him know when he's so wrapped up in other things that he begins to ignore the children?
 - c. How much are you a help for your husband?

THE HUSBAND'S PERFECT WIFE IS PRAISEWORTHY, vv 28-31

- A. The PERFECT WIFE is praiseworthy & receives praise from three sources.
 1. Notice the text: "Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.' Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates."
 2. The PERFECT WIFE receives her praise from her children, from her husband, & from her works.
- B. I find it very illustrative that this woman receives praise from both her children & her husband.
 1. They are the ones who know her like no one else does, yet they praise her.
 - a. There are the ones who see her when she's angry, when she burns the super, when a business deal falls through. Although they see her away from the public spotlight, they are able to praise her.
 - b. This is not a woman—like Ananias & Sapphira—who wants to appear righteous but has a heart full of darkness.
 2. Notice also what her husband says about the PERFECT WIFE: "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all."
 - a. This is poetry & I have no doubt whatsoever that there is exaggeration being used here.
 - b. But, I'm not convinced that this text is pure hyperbole.
 - 1) As one looks over the lists of this woman's virtues, it would be impossible not to agree with her husband & say that she has surpassed all other women.
 - 2) This is truly a one-of-a-kind woman.
 - c. I am persuaded that each husband here needs to be able to think these words about his wife.
 - 1) But, the wording of this passage makes that quite impossible, doesn't it? If my wife surpasses all other wives, she'll surpass your wife; and if your wife surpasses all other wives, she'll surpass my wife.
 - 2) Really that's the point!
 - a) In my eyes, Tammy surpasses all other women, and I pray to God that your wife surpasses all other women in your eyes.
 - b) I've trusted Tammy like I've never trusted any other woman. I gave my life to Tammy, I've had children with her. Because of our years together, I have a trust for Tammy that I dare not have

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- with any other woman.
 - c) Tammy has helped me in ways that no other woman has helped me.
 - i. There is a song that comes on the radio occasionally that Tammy used to absolutely hate, but I have always loved.
 - ii. One day she asked me why I loved that song so much & I said, "Because it speaks volumes about what you've done in my life."
 - 3) For me, Tammy is the PERFECT WIFE & she surpasses all others.
 - 4) Is that the case for you & your wife?
 - a) Seeing our wives that way is really a matter of the will—we decide we shall see her in that light.
 - b) Tammy, because she is a frail human being, is by no means perfect.
 - i. Even according to this text, Tammy falls far short—The woman depicted here is an expert seamstress. Tammy can hem my pants & put on a button, but that's about the extent of it. I have never seen her put her hands to the distaff & I seriously doubt that I ever will.
 - ii. But, Tammy completes me. She is my other half. She is the PERFECT WIFE for me, because she & I have decided we are going to make this work, and we're going to do right by each other.
- C. The works of this woman also praise her.
- 1. It seems to me that the PERFECT WIFE's husband praises her in the city gates so that everyone will hear what he has to say.
 - a. On the one hand, he doesn't need to do that, for the woman's works speak volumes for themselves.
 - b. But, on the other hand, his public praise dovetails quite perfectly with what people already know. What the husband says is consistent with what people have seen of this woman.
 - 2. Our works do speak volumes about us.
 - a. Of Abel, the author of Hebrews says, "Through his faith, though he died, he still speaks" (Heb 11:4). His works speak to us today about proper respect for God & giving God the best.
 - b. The PERFECT WIFE's works spoke volumes about faithfulness to God & dedication to family.
 - c. What do your works say about you this day?
 - 1) Do your works speak volumes about faithfulness to God & dedication to family?
 - 2) Do you need to come this morning & change what your works say of you?