

Living Out Wisdom

Key Verse: *“Favour
is deceitful, and
beauty is vain: but
a woman that
feareth the LORD,
she shall be
praised.”*
—Proverbs 31:30

Selected Scripture:
*Proverbs 31:8-14,
25-30*

THE AUTHOR OF PROVERBS

31 is identified as King Lemuel who records a prophecy taught to him by his mother. (vs. 1) Bible commentators are divided as to whether King Lemuel actually was King Solomon or whether someone else wrote this chapter. “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” (vss. 6,7) These verses suggest the use of strong drink is appropriate for those who are very ill, filled with sadness, or extremely poor. Such thoughts are at variance with the following text that clearly was written by Solomon. “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”—Prov. 20:1

Certain portions of Proverbs 31 do not appear to have applicability either for Christians or for mankind in general today, even though, when these words were written, in certain cultures they may have depicted views as to how the idealized wife might conduct herself, at least in the minds of Lemuel and his mother.

In addressing Christian men, sage counsel is given as to how they should relate to their wives. “Ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being

heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” (I Pet. 3:7) Many of the expectations concerning wives as recorded by King Lemuel are contrary to the foregoing expression by the Apostle Peter, such as rising prior to daybreak to prepare breakfast (Prov. 31:15), buying fields and planting vineyards (vs. 16), and spinning, weaving, and toiling into the night. (vss. 18,19) At the same time, it is suggested the well-fed and well-dressed husband should be involved in handling matters of importance with other elders of the city.—vs. 23

Christian believers recognize the dual responsibility of both men and women in seeing that their respective responsibilities agree with the following scripture. “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” (I Tim. 5:8) Providing for one’s own implies not only temporal needs, but also—and most importantly—spiritual nourishment and concern in every way for the entire family. It is, therefore, difficult to harmonize King Lemuel’s view as to the roles and relationships of husbands and wives with what is indicated in other scriptures, especially with regard to devoted Christians.

There are many transitory concerns that may come to the believer’s mind, but our Key Verse indicates that the woman that reverences God is worthy of praise. (Prov. 31:30) The chapter then concludes with the thought that others will recognize a life so ordered as well. All faithful believers, men and women, will reap rich rewards by following the words of the Master, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . . Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”—Matt. 6:19-21,33 ■