

A Way to Speak

△ Proverbs 31: 10-31

Male to read Proverbs?

Main voice of Proverbs is a Father to his Son

And there is limited portrayal of women in Proverbs

Largely addressed to young men

But not that women are inferior to men

There are warnings against immoral women and men!

Warnings against illicit relationships

But also rejoices in sexual relationship in marriage

△ Proverbs 5:15-19

There are women voices too

instructions by a mother or with respect to a mother

△ 1:8, 6:20, 10:1, 15:20: 23:22-55

King Lemuel passes on instruction given by his mother

All good and life-giving wisdom is personified as a woman

Proverbs 8: reflection on personal nature of wisdom

At the centre: Woman Wisdom

△ 8:22-31

her presence at creation

rejoicing in God's presence

delighting at humankind

Is Wisdom therefore like God's Spirit

Or dependent on God's Spirit also present at creation

Finally the portrayal of a woman

as the crowning point of the whole teaching of Proverbs

As we will see this portrait may be less gender specific than on first reading

As the wisdom of Proverbs is for everyone

But first: let's hear a female voice on this passage: Kim Hill

A gender neutral translation

So let us look at these verses in a gender neutral way

By translating she/her into they/them plural

A spouse of noble character who can find?

They are worth far more than rubies.

Their spouses have full confidence in them

- and lack nothing of value.

They bring them good, not harm, all the days of their life.

They select wool and flax

and works with eager hands.
They are like the merchant ships,
bringing their food from afar.
They get up while it is still night;
they provide food for their family
and portions for their servants/workers.
They considers a field and buy it;
out of their earnings they plant
vineyards.
They set about their work vigorously;
their arms are strong for their tasks.
They see that their trading is profitable,
and their lamps does not go out at night.
In their hands they holds the distaff
and grasp the spindle with their fingers.
They open their arms to the poor
and extend their hands to the needy.
When it snows, they have no fear for their
household;
- for all of them are clothed in scarlet.
They make coverings for their beds;
They are clothed in fine linen and purple.
Their spouses are respected at the city
gate,
where they takes their seats among the
elders
of the land.
They make linen garments and sell them,
and supply the merchants with sashes.
They are clothed with strength and dignity;
they can laugh at the days to come.
They speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on their
tongue.
They watch over the affairs of her
household

and they do not eat the bread of

and they do not eat the bread of
idleness.
Their children arise and call them blessed;
Their spouses also, and they praises
them:
"Many people do noble things,
but you surpass them all."
Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a person who fears the Lord is to be
praised.
Honor them for all that their hands have
done,
and let their works bring them praise at
the city
gate.

Having read this passage in this way

I hope it is clear that there are only a
few lines that read funny,

As still in this day and age we think
these activities are predominately
done by women

But others we may associate
predominatly with men!

Although the buying of a field could be
better translated as subduing a field

Turning a rocky field into a vineyard - still
traditionally seen as a man's job

Author of Proverbs
deliberately chose a women

Perhaps in their time counter

culturally

As women were not regarded in this way then - and still now in many societies as being capable of what this portrait shows

Most time we even think of wise people, we think of men with gray beards and gurus are also predominately male

As women were ignored at that time and only regarded for, their beauty

But time and time the Bible goes against that principle by portraying counter cultural women

Women who are important for God's salvation story

Miriam, Rahab, Ruth, Esther and Mary to name just a few

Important not for what they looked like

But because they feared the Lord

Their actions brought about God's purposes

So rejoice that this is a portrait of a woman

A woman working on her frontline

Achieving more than most men will
not even dare to think about

Application

The wisdom of proverbs is not
found in esoteric methods /
academic activities / achieved
social status

Instead it is found in our daily
activities: on our frontlines

Whether you are male or female or
regard yourself as something in
between

Working to make a living,
Providing for House and
Wellbeing for family and children,

It is focused on what the wise do,
not what they are: attractive,
beautiful

And all of that day-to-day wisdom
that we all need

As we cannot live without it

All that day to day wisdom comes
out of a fear of the Lord

But how can we get this wisdom
you may ask

James 1:5 If anyone is lacking in

wisdom ask God, who gives generously and and ungrudgingly, and it will be given to you

James 3:13-18 13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

So let us pray and ask God for more of his wisdom in our daily lives and at the same time increase our fear for him