

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Proverbs 31

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Introduction

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Introduction

- Several books of the Bible are about women.
 - Ruth
 - Esther
 - The Song of Solomon

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Introduction

- The wives of the patriarchs are major characters in the biblical narrative.
 - Sarah
 - Rebekah
 - Rachel
 - Leah

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Introduction

- Women take on prominent roles in biblical history.
 - Miriam in Exodus
 - Deborah in Judges
 - Huldah the Prophetess in 2 Kings

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Introduction

- Women play important parts in the Gospels.
 - Mary, the mother of Jesus
 - Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist
 - Mary and Martha

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Introduction

- They also appear in major roles in **Acts**.
 - Lydia
 - Priscilla
 - The four daughters of Philip the Evangelist.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Introduction

- Much of the Bible is written about women.
- Not much is written *by women*.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Introduction

- This chapter may be the only part.
- It is also the only instruction we have from a Queen Mother in the ancient Near East.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Introduction

- It is by an unknown **King Lemuel**.
- (**Agur son of Jakeh** in **Chapter 30** is also unknown.)
- Lemuel says it is really the advice he got from his mother.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Introduction

What we have here is 'the picture of godliness that is severely practical, of values that are sound and humane, and of a success that has been most diligently earned.'

*– Dr. Tewoldemedhin Habtu,
Africa International University*



The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Introduction

Outline of Proverbs 31:

- The Wise King 31:1-9
- The Wise Wife 31:10-31

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise King Proverbs 31:1-9

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise King Proverbs 31:1-9

- **31:1-3** Her first warning is about women.
- Good advice for a king – or any other young man.
- Consider both David and Solomon.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise King Proverbs 31:1-9

- **31:1-3** Strong, influential men are often weak in their discernment of women.
- It's helpful to read the book of **Proverbs**.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise King Proverbs 31:1-9

- **31:4-7** Her second warning deals with alcohol.
- A ruler must always have his full faculties about him.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise King Proverbs 31:1-9

- **31:4-7** Adolph Hitler normally abstained from alcohol – and that was in Germany.
- Even wicked rulers can get a lot done with a clear head.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:8-9** Finally, a ruler needs to always consider the rights of the poor and needy.
- This has to be intentional for rulers.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:8-9** Rich, well-connected people always want governments to work in their favor.
- The pressure can be hard for a ruler to resist.
- A just ruler has to keep the neediest people in mind.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- An acrostic.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- An acrostic.
 - 22 verses long.
 - 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet.
 - Each verse begins with a different letter – in order.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:10** An excellent wife = a capable woman
- The word *excellent* can also point to strength, wealth or ability.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:11-12** She is trustworthy.
- A summary of all the other qualities.
- Trustworthy increase in responsibility – because people continually trust them.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:13-19** She is hardworking.
- The word we keep using in **Proverbs** is **diligent**.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:13-19** We can sum up this section like this:
 - She is diligent.
 - She is resourceful.
 - She develops her talents and abilities.

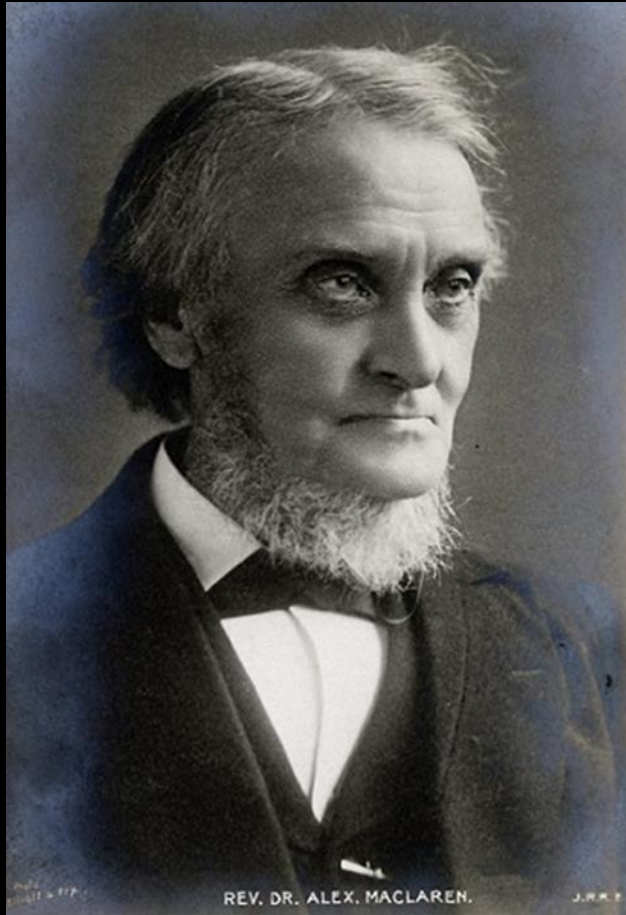
The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:19** the distaff ... the spindle These images come from spinning wool – a job that needed to be done.
- The purpose is not to limit women to domestic chores – but to illustrate the importance of their efforts.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31



Throughout its pages the Bible reverences diligence. It is the condition of prosperity in material and spiritual things. Vainly do men and women try to dodge the law which makes the 'sweat of the brow' the indispensable requisite for 'eating bread.'

– Alexander Maclaren (1826 – 1910)

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:20** the poor ... the needy She is not only hardworking, but generous.
- One of the purposes of work is material gain, which later can turn into generosity.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- 31:20 Paul saw it like this.

Ephesians 4:28 (ESV) Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:21-29** Look at all the ways she is a blessing to her family.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:23** the gates This is similar to the public square.
- It was the center of local business and politics.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:23** **the gates** This is similar to the public square.
- It was the center of local business and politics.
- A woman can make or break a man's reputation.
- How awful when spouses compete with rather than support one another.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:26** wisdom ... kindness We looked at the topic of wise words earlier in the book.
- Wise words are what we know of Lemuel's mother.
- Her son paid attention.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Proverbs 31



The most important ministry mothers and fathers have is the spiritual training of their children ... Happy is that person who had a God-fearing mother who warned him about sin, and happier is the person who heeded her warnings.

– Warren Wiersbe

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- 31:27 More about this woman's hard work.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

The responsibilities that this woman discharges are indicative of the important role of the woman in ancient Israelite society: she provided both clothing and food for her family and servants (31:13-15, 19, 21-22), managed the estate (31:16-18, 27), cared for the poor (31:20), sold her own handwork (31:24), and engaged in teaching (31:26).

*– Dr. Tewoldemedhin Habtu,
Africa International University*



The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- 31:28-29 her children ... her husband
- When you work on your character, your reputation will usually follow.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

Your reputation is who people think you are, your character is who you really are.

– John Wooden (1910 – 2010)



The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- 31:28-29 her children ... her husband
- Your family generally knows who you really are.
- For both men and women – reputation begins at home.

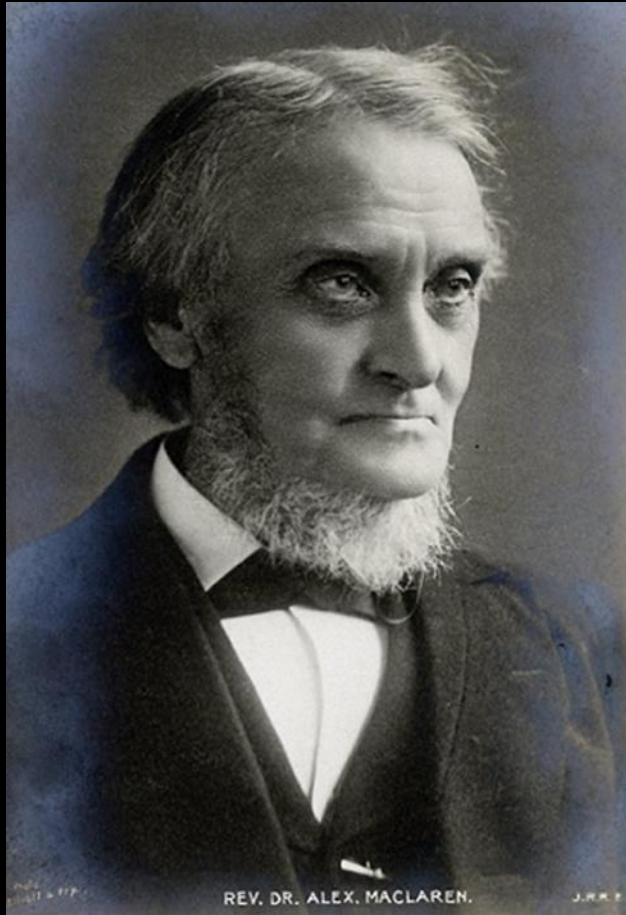
The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:30** charm ... beauty ... fear of the Lord
- Physical beauty can make you popular for while, but it won't make you a better person.
- Unfortunately, it tends to be temporary – like a young man's ability in sports.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31



Beauty is skin deep. Let young men look deeper than a fair face. Let young women seek for that beauty which does not fade. The fear of the Lord lies at the bottom of all goodness that will last through the tear and wear of wedded life.

– Alexander Maclaren (1826 – 1910)

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31



Her charm and her success owe nothing to chance, because her outlook and her influence have the solid foundation of the fear of the Lord.

*– Derek Kidner (1913 – 2008),
Warden of Tyndale House, Cambridge*

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

The Wise Wife Proverbs 31:10-31

- **31:31** A life filled with good works will bring its own reward- they will not be ignored forever.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Conclusions

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Conclusions

Whether bartering in the marketplaces, weaving, trading, feeding and clothing others, planting vineyards, mixing wine, or burning the midnight oil, the labor of women is here elevated, theologically legitimated, and claimed as the preferable means of moral and theological instruction.

– From the Womens Bible Commentary, C. A. Newsom, J. E. Lapsley, & S. H. Ringe (Eds.).

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Conclusions

- Three things for the king to remember:
 - Be careful with women.
 - Be careful with wine.
 - Remember the rights of the afflicted.

The Wisdom of Lemuel's Mother

Conclusions

- Seven characteristics of the wise woman:
 - She is trustworthy.
 - She is diligent.
 - She is resourceful.
 - She develops her talents and abilities.
 - She is generous.
 - She is a blessing to her family.
 - She fears the Lord.