

### **The Women of Proverbs**

**Memory Verse:** *Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised* (Prov. 31:30 NIV).

#### **Background Helps:**

This week, rather than studying an actual woman from biblical history, we consider the various types of women portrayed in the book of Proverbs: the immoral woman (in chaps. 5, 6, and 7), the wise woman and the foolish woman contrasted (miscellaneous proverbs), and the wife of noble character (31:10-31). The sayings of the mother of King Lemuel (otherwise unknown) are also included (31:1-9).

#### **Lesson Helps:**


This quarter in Sunday school is being devoted to the study of prominent women of the Bible. Probably, most classes will want to focus their attention this week on the ideal picture of the wife of noble character in Proverbs 31:10-31. However, there are a couple of other alternatives:


1. My aim is to teach my students about Solomon's warnings against the immoral woman, so that they will flee from temptations to sexual immorality. Proverbs 5, 6, and 7 include some of the most explicit warnings against sexual immorality found in Scripture. Consider the following questions: How does the immoral woman tempt the young man to fall into sexual sin? What are the consequences of falling into the sin of sexual immorality? How can we avoid sexual immorality? (See the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife in Gen. 39. Also, see 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, and Hebrews 13:4.) This lesson would be very appropriate for a class of teenage boys or college and career age men. Also, a class of young women could be warned against behavior that is enticing to young men. (You could divide the class between guys and gals for this one week.)
2. My aim is to teach my students about the wise counsel of King Lemuel's mother, so that they will show discernment in choosing political leaders (Prov. 31:1-9). What three qualities does the mother of King Lemuel urge her son to demonstrate in his role as king? Answer: chastity (vv. 2-3), temperance (vv. 4-7), and justice (vv. 8-9). Why are these qualities so important in a public official? This lesson will be timely in an election season, helping potential voters to measure the candidates and vote appropriately. Also, these words of King Lemuel's mother provide excellent moral guidance to anyone who serves in a position of authority over others.
3. My aim is to teach my students about the wife of noble character in Proverbs 31:10-31, to that they will seek to emulate her character and conduct (or, so they will seek a wife of such character and conduct). As is well known, Proverbs

31:10-31 is an acrostic poem, following the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in succession and setting forth the virtues of the ideal wife. Observe what the passage teaches about her relationships to her husband, children, and servants; her work habits; her character traits; her skills; her relationship to her home and to the community; her relationship to God; and her praise. Notice that Boaz calls Ruth a woman of noble character in Ruth 3:11 (same expression as in Prov. 31:10).

Possible method: Direct your students to try writing their own acrostic poem, describing the wife (or woman or mother) of noble character in contemporary terms, using the letters of the English alphabet (perhaps omitting K, Q, X, and Z). Challenge wives and mothers (or future wives and mothers), by God's grace, to grow toward this ideal of godly womanhood. Urge young men to look for this kind of woman as a future wife (or at least to look for this potential in a prospective mate). Encourage husbands and children to express appreciation and praise to their wives and mothers.

**Assignment:**

 Read about Elizabeth and Mary (Prominent Women of the Bible).

 Memorize 1 Peter 5:5b.