

Women & Wine

Memory Text: “Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings. *It is* not for kings, O Lemuel, *it is* not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink.” (Proverbs 31:3, 4)

Setting The Stage: The book of Proverbs begins with advice and counsel from a father to a son. The book of Proverbs closes with the practical advice from a mother to a son. Whether Lemuel is another name for King Solomon or not (it really can't be substantiated) the warning and advice offered is directed to two areas that could threaten a king: wine and women.

For a king to be an effective ruler he must be careful of his influences. He needs to keep his mind in pristine condition and use his time well. “While alcohol produces nothing but trouble, having a good wife can be highly beneficial.”

Can we learn anything from counsel offered a king? From a practical point of view the areas of concern addressed in Proverbs 31 are areas all of us can be affected by. From a spiritual point of view: in Revelation 1:6 what are God's people called? Kings and priests. If you are a child of the king you are royalty, and if royalty then the counsel is just as much for you and me.

Sunday – A Toast “To Life”?

Proverbs 31:4, 5, 8, 9; Leviticus 10:9, 10

Proverbs 31:3. This is a warning to men against being soft, effeminate, and distracted, but primarily against immorality. Solomon started out so well, but as he became prosperous he multiplied his wives who were of foreign origin and his heart was led away from loyalty to God (see 1 Kings 11:1-4).

But this counsel is not just for men, but for women also. We live in a promiscuous age. Infidelity is on the rise. Sex sells (implicit or explicit). Nothing is left to the imagination (not that one ought to let their minds wander). Music, TV, movies, and the internet bombard the senses with imagery that should cause us to blush. There is a push to normalize immoral behavior. Everything that we once thought wrong is now promoted as right. After all, it is said, “We are human and we can't help ourselves.” With David may we say, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.” (Ps. 101:3) Let's make a covenant with our eyes, what do you say?

Proverbs 31:4. We live in a culture where the use of alcoholic beverages is prevalent. It is not just socially acceptable to drink, it is expected that you drink. Beer companies pay big bucks to promote their products by promoting the idea that

you'll have an adventurous life if you drink their brand. A lot of time, effort, and money are spent to convince drinkers that drinking is okay.

Today, drinking wine has become associated with sophistication. The title to this lesson is appropriate considering that 60% of those who drink wine in the U.S. are women (Beverage Information Group). While strong drink spells trouble, wine has an alluring quality that has become easy to love thereby making it easy to abuse by women. In Britain there are just as many women abusing alcohol as there are men. In an ABC interview with former alcoholic Ann Dawsett and author of the book "Drink," Ann was reported as saying that, "We have normalized drinking. We look at red wine like it's dark chocolate."

Scientific studies are occasionally released that speaks well of drinking wine. But why not get the same benefits from Welches and completely rule out the death of numerous brain cells and the risk of abusing wine with its deadly side effects? Ironically, the wine glass is often raised in a toast to long life and prosperity, when in fact the very substance in that glass has brought about opposite effects.

Proverbs 31:5, 8, 9. The issue is alcohol causes poor judgment. Kings, rulers, politicians, CEO's all carry the responsibility of making clear-minded decisions and often these decisions are weighty. Don't trust anyone given to drink.

Some stats: "Tests show that after drinking three bottles of beer, there is an average of 13 percent net memory loss. After taking only small quantities of alcohol, trained typists were tested and their errors increased 40 percent. Only one ounce of alcohol increases the time required to make a decision by nearly 10 percent; hinders muscular reaction by 17 percent; increases errors due to lack of attention by 35 percent." - Paul Harvey

If alcohol causes the dulling of the sensibilities and impairs judgment, should Christians have anything to do with it?

Leviticus 10:9, 10: "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean." This was the instruction for the priests, and today God's people are a "royal priesthood." (1 Peter 2:9) More than ever we need to be alert to the dangers and deceptions the devil has prepared for us in order to destroy us. We need our wits, don't we?

In the courts of Babylon Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the kings meat or drink (Dan. 1:8). On the cross, although in incredible pain and agony, Jesus declined the offer of fermented wine mingled with myrrh (Matt. 27:34). If they did, ought not we? We need clear minds to resist temptation and to keep a strong faith in God, especially in the day of "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots" who with her intoxicating wine (false doctrine) in her cup is

seeking to lead men and women away from truth and the worship of the Creator God (see Rev. 17:1-5).

Monday – A Toast “to Death”

Proverbs 31:6, 7; Proverbs 23:30-35;

Proverbs 31:6, 7. Giving alcohol to a depressed person would be like giving salt to someone who is dehydrated. She is not recommending it. Perhaps these words were written with a hint of irony (not uncaring) - “If anyone is permitted to drink strong drink let it be the person who has given up on life and on their way out.”

Proverbs 23:29, 30: “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine those who go in search of mixed wine.” 2 out of every 5 people who drink socially end up abusing alcohol. If you had a dog that bit 2 out of every 5 people who came to your home, would you keep the dog around?

Consider this other well-known fact: In the next 24 hours, alcohol will be responsible for nearly half of all the homicides; the people who will die on the highway; the people who will be admitted to the hospital; the people who will be incarcerated in jail or prison; the people who will be arrested for domestic violence; the people who will be born with birth defects. In addition, alcohol deserves a mention for being responsible for a quarter of all suicides.

It’s clear enough from these appalling statistics that any clear thinking person, especially a Christian, would feel profound conviction to avoid a drug that accounts for an incredible amount of misery in every culture it touches.

Then there is the Bible’s hall of shame: “Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent.” (Genesis 9:21) “So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose” (Genesis 19:33). The offspring of this relationship became the nations of Moab and Ammon, the mortal enemies of God’s people.

Then there is the infamous experience when the children of Israel drank alcohol, stripped themselves naked, and worshiped a golden calf (Exodus 32:6, 25). Amnon, another drinker and the son of David, raped his half-sister Tamar. Because of this incestuous act, he lost his life at the hands of his enraged brother while intoxicated (2 Samuel 13:28). These biblical examples speak loudly to us about having nothing to do with alcohol.

Thank God that if you struggle with alcohol there is victory in Christ (Phil. 4:13). Remember that Jesus Christ is more powerful than Jack Daniels, and that the blood of the Son of God is stronger than Budweiser.

Tuesday – A Virtuous Woman

Proverbs 31:10; 8:1-36

Proverbs 31:10. The next 22 verses are in the form of an acrostic (poem) built around the Hebrew alphabet of 22 letters like some of the Psalms and Lamentations. Verse 10 begins with the first letter, v. 11 with the second, etc.

While the following verses describe the qualities of a the “virtuous woman,” there is good reason to believe that she also represents wisdom, “not as some lofty and unachievable ideal but as a practical and approachable women who could become our life companion.” (see Prov. 1:20-33; 3:13-20; 4:5-9 for examples of wisdom personified). Wisdom is personified as a noble, virtuous woman to stands in stark contrast to the “other” woman (foolishness) who seeks to trap and ruin a person’s life.

Let’s compare wisdom as mentioned in Proverbs 8 with the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 to see the comparisons: 1. She is precious and worth finding (Prov. 31:10; 8:35). 2. Her worth is more than rubies (Prov. 31:10; 8:11). 3. She provides food (Prov. 31:14; 8:19). 4. She is strong (Prov. 31:17, 25; 8:14). 5. She is wise (Prov. 31:26; 8:1). 6. She is praised (Prov. 31:28; 8:34).

Talkative of Pilgrim’s Progress was more concerned with facts than substance, more concerned with talk than action. True wisdom is biblical knowledge applied. Knowing a lot doesn’t equal righteousness. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “We have guided missiles and misguided men.”

Wednesday – She Works

Proverbs 31:12, 15, 18, 20, 25

Proverbs 31:17. “Virtuous wife” is literally “a woman of power,” or a “wife of valor.” The LXX has “a masculine woman,” meaning that she is strong, vigorous, and possesses excellent qualities. While this description of the virtuous wife presents an ideal for any woman to strive towards (yet not an ideal for a husband to hang over the head of his wife!), it also presents the qualities of a person (male and female) who possesses true wisdom.

Unlike the sluggard mentioned in Proverbs 6, the truly wise work. Why is the woman working?

Proverbs 31:12, 15, 18: “She does him good and not evil all the days of her life...She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants...She perceives that her merchandise *is* good, And her lamp does not go out by night.” She works because of her sense of responsibility. How can we show our gratitude toward those who give their all for our welfare?

How many men and women today work hard to not have to work at all? A personnel manager rejected a job applicant because the firm was overstaffed. But the would-be employee persisted, "The little bit of work I'd do won't even be noticed!" God created us to work. We find satisfaction and purpose to life when we are engaged in something productive. Living in the cycle of dependency is debilitating to one's self-worth, ambitions, and dreams. Even in the command to rest every Sabbath is the implication to work. Ezekiel calls the other six days, "working days" (Ezek. 46:1).

Thursday – She Cares

Proverbs 31:26-31

What other important qualities are seen in this woman? **Proverbs 31:26-31**. Why are these important for all of us, regardless of who we are?

v. 26 – She doesn't have the time to devote to gossip or stick her nose in others people's business. She's busy keeping quiet order in her home, and building her children up with her kind words in soothing tones.

v. 27 – She's not looking for the easy road, neither does she devote precious hours to daytime TV dramas or sensual novels.

v. 28 – She's making her home good and therefore deserves the sincere praise of her children and husband.

v. 29 – She is not content with status quo. She strives toward excellence. Lexus - the pursuit of perfection.

v. 30 – Loves and fears the Lord. Steady and solid. Not deceived by glamour and glitter. She knows that true beauty resides within not without.

v. 31 – Because we cannot read the heart the only sure way to measure the quality of another is to observe the fruit of the life as revealed in their works. In the gates of the city where judgments are made concerning all who live within in the walls, the work of the virtuous woman speaks for herself and she needs no other advocate. She will forever enjoy the sweet fruit of her unselfish toil and her good example. What example are we teaching our children...others?

Revelation 14:6, 7: "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth - to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people - saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.'"

Now we have a better grasp of what fearing the Lord looks like. We just spent 13 weeks learning that to fear the Lord is to make practical application of the word of God to our daily lives in the wise choices we make.

Appeal: The book of Proverbs concludes with reminders about the importance of the lifestyle choices we make. There are no unimportant decisions and choices. True success in our walk with God comes from fearing the Lord (Prov. 31:30). Won't you let this be your experience today and forever?