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EPISODE 15: HOW TO TEACH PROVERBS 31

SUMMARY

What would the panorama of a godly, feminine life look like? If you had to capture it from beginning to end in one short poem, what would you write? Proverbs 31 gives us the beautiful answer. Written by a mom for her son as counsel for the type of women he should be seeking as a wife, this acrostic poem casts a vision for the focus, tenor, fruit, and ground of the kind of life the Father calls his daughters to.

SPECIFICS

In leading your conversation on the text, don't miss these big ideas:

Don't stress your women out!

Although it might read that way, this text is not presenting an actual "superwoman" who existed once upon a time and who all women should all strive to emulate down to the detail ... "so you better learn how to sew!" It's an acrostic poem that creatively builds a composite sketch of all the varied pursuits and activities a godly woman might give herself to. Make sure your women don't engage this text as if it's an inspired checklist to vet themselves against per se. Emphasize first the big themes, and then work through how the details fit in that larger picture.

Don't miss the focus of this woman's varied pursuits and activities.

Everything she does is about her serving others *from the inside-out of her home*. Her own self-actualization is not the aim; the good of others is. Our women are disciplined by American culture to devalue the home and do ANYTHING but put their best efforts there, or at least to make sure to first establish their financial/occupational independence outside the home before maybe stepping back in sort of. But not this woman. Everything is focused on her home thriving.

Don't miss who benefits and thrives because of her.

Everyone! Her husband (v. 11, 12), her sons and daughters (v. 28), everyone who intersects with her home (v. 15, 20), and her city/culture (v. 23)! Her influence is incredible.

Don't miss the ground motivation for her all-in, happy embrace of femininity?

She "fears the Lord," or, we would say, "believes the gospel." (v. 30) She has no hesitation that a life devoted to those God has called her to serve is worth living because it is God who has called her to it.

Don't miss the explicit references to feminine strength and fearlessness.

Yes, as the Spirit clearly teaches in I Peter 3, there is a sense in which women are "weaker" relative to men. Femininity, at its core, is a "surrender" of authority and self-determination, as Elizabeth Elliot so helpfully teaches. God has written this truth about feminine "weakness" into our biology – it's why we have a WNBA and a thousand other similar, common-sense separations of the sexes in certain arenas of life. (Again, men and women are not better or worse, but different.) But none of this implies that "women are weak" in absolute sense, or that femininity equals fragility. On the contrary! A woman who trusts God, loves others, and embraces her feminine callings embodies a strength that will steal your breath! Is anyone stronger than a woman who fears the Lord? Does this Proverbs 31 women seem weak to you? Please! Take time here to identify explicit references to strength/fearlessness in the text and talk about what feminine strength does and does not look like.

Don't miss that this woman was super active outside of her home in ways that fit with her feminine callings.

Proverbs 31 presents to us the beautiful sweep of life committed to fearing God, embracing femininity, and serving others *for decades*. Over that time, depending on seasonal realities and priorities, her pursuits were varied, including lots of work inside *and outside* the home. The thread that ties them all together is the relentless focus on her home benefiting from her efforts.

Pastoral focus:

If you are the pastor in this conversations, PRAISE THESE WOMEN like the last verse commands you to! Be explicit. Look them in the eye and affirm the ways that they have given themselves to the things that this text celebrates.

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