

Doesn't Christianity Denigrate Women - Proverbs 31:10-31 **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

Notes from the Sermon

The Proverbs 31 woman is often used as the picture of the ideal, a standard for women in the church to attain. Which in some ways, it is. Still, this image of femininity is significantly different from the ideal that I have seen pictured in churches, that of a woman who is home for her man. The Proverbs 31 woman is a strong woman who is industrious, engaged in business, and a leader in her community. To truly understand Proverbs 31 we have to read it in the entire context of Proverbs. This book of poetic wisdom is primarily written to young men, the words of a father to their teenage sons. For 30 chapters the poems have been calling people, but primarily guys, to live holy lives of character in all areas of life. Then, after a 30 chapter summons to wise living, after telling us to live in this way, Proverbs then says, "Now, go find this woman to be your wife." My first point, then, is that if chapter 31 is a standard to raise up for women, then we better be lifting up the first 30 chapters for the dudes. Yet, the striking thing about Proverbs 31 is what it does celebrate, the strength, independence, leadership, and business sense of the woman.

Our question this week from Rebecca McLaughlin's book is, "Doesn't Christianity denigrate women?" I am glad that as a gifted woman, she wrote on this topic, and encourage you to buy the book and read this chapter. We do have to acknowledge that in our context and church history, yes, there are ways the church has denigrated Christianity. Yet, I believe that this is a failure to live out the ideas, cherry picking some Scriptures while under-emphasizing others in order to support a male-dominated view of society and the church. This is a reflection of one of the two dangers into which we can drift concerning gender and sexuality. This is the danger of over-inflating the Bible's teaching of gender, so emphasizing the differences between the roles given to men and women. We can end up praising powerful men who fit the macho stereotype while despising men who do not fit the stereotype. And we can so define the role of women in a way that we tacitly teach that a woman's worth is found in submitting to and pleasing her husband and family. When we do this we can fail to see the beauty of the image of God in women, failing to treat them as equals in creation and in the redemptive plan of God. Couple this with the church's failures or silence around important issues such as sexual abuse, equality in the marketplace, and voting rights, and its not difficult to see why the world around us believes we are oppressors of women.

Yet, our moment in culture has quickly ran deep into the other danger, that of flattening the differences between men and women as given by God in creation. God created us male and female, and this gift is good. Men and women are both made in the image of God, yet they are different from each other in ways that are inherent. And these differences are good. Equality does not mean the same, yet, our culture has decided that gender is nothing more than a social construct, and affirming the differences are viewed as misogynistic. Now, we have to admit, the criticism that the church has been misogynistic is valid in some ways. Still, our culture has run so far past this point that we no longer even believe in a biological reality of gender. Ours is a moment with all kinds of confusion about the reality of gender, so much so that anyone can identify as any gender, which ultimately leaves the concept of gender with no meaning.

So we must affirm that the Bible's teaching on gender is a good, a gift for our human flourishing, while prophetically speaking against the abuse and marginalization of women and the flattening of gender differences. Both are evil, and we need to be clear in both directions. But the truth is that the history of Christianity reveals that the church was (and now should be) the safest place for women where they could develop and use their gifts and

flourish. In the early church, women flocked from Roman culture, where they were nothing more than property, expected to be a faithful slave to husbands, into the church where they were valued as equals. Furthermore the teaching to their husbands told them to love their wife (not wives), to be sexually faithful to her, to treat her as an equal in redemption. The early church also received women as prophets, evangelists, theologians, and leaders. So, if we are honoring Christ and Scripture, our church will honor the beauty of the differences, affirming the God-given roles in the home and church while at the same time celebrating women as equals as God's image bears and in the redemption story. And our church will disciple women well, celebrate their gifts, and deploy them for mission and ministry.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Joshua 2	Joshua 3	Joshua 4	Joshua 5	Joshua 6	Joshua 7	Joshua 8

Reading from this past week: Proverbs 31:10-31

Family Worship

Song - *Who you Say I Am*

<https://youtu.be/lcC1Bp13n> 4

Gospel Project

Unit: The Miracles of Jesus

Story: Jesus fed many people

Big Picture Question: Is Jesus God or human?

Answer: As the Son of God, Jesus is both fully God and fully human.

Scripture: Mark 8

New City Catechism

Question #26: What else does Christ's death redeem?

Answer: Every part of fallen creation.

Verse: Colossians 1:19-20

Scripture

Proverbs 31:10-31

- Do you know of stories where women have been mistreated in the church? If you are female, do you have a story?
- What characteristics of the Proverbs 31 woman stand out to you? How does this woman differ from the idea that is pictures in some churches?
- Why is it importance to affirm and celebrate both the equality of men and women in creation and redemption, while also celebrating the inherent differences between men and women?
- What are some things our church could do to celebrate women and give them a place where they will flourish?

Prayer

*Pray that our church would be a place where women feel safe, have their gifts developed, and thrive.

*Pray for unreached and unengaged people groups around the world. Unreached people groups are those with less than 2% Christian and virtually no churches are missionaries.