

37). September 7-13—Proverbs and Ecclesiastes

- 1) Pro 1:8; 4:3; 6:20; 10:1; 15:20; 19:26; 20:20; 23:22, 25; 28:24; 29:15; 30:11, 17;
31:28—**Mother(s)**

Proverbs elevates mothers—most often paired with fathers—as teachers and lawgivers worthy of equal honor. Twice the book commands children to heed both their father’s instruction and their mother’s law (Pro 1:8; 6:20). Solomon testified he was “tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother” (Pro 4:3), showing maternal affection’s formative power. A wise son brings gladness to both parents, while a foolish son becomes “the heaviness of his mother” (Pro 10:1). The severest judgments fall upon those who curse, mock, despise, waste, chase away, or rob their mothers—their lamp shall be put out in darkness and ravens shall pick out their eyes (Pro 20:20; 30:17). Children must honor their mothers even in old age (Pro 23:22) and never bring them shame through undisciplined living (Pro 29:15). The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 receives the ultimate tribute: “Her children arise up, and call her blessed” (Pro 31:28). Mothers in Proverbs hold authority to teach God’s law and deserve reverence equal to fathers.

- 2) Pro 2:16-19; 5:3-8, 20; 6:24; 7:5; 20:16; 22:14; 23:27, 33; 27:13—**Strange Woman**

The “strange woman” appears 10 times in Proverbs as a warning against adultery and sexual sin. A strange woman is connected to an “evil woman” (Pro 6:24). The author warns that a strange woman has lips like honeycomb, but then her mouth becomes a deep pit for those the Lord abhors (Pro 5:3; 22:14). Her words flatter smoothly, yet her end proves bitter as wormwood and sharp as a two-edged sword (Pro 5:4). She forsakes the covenant of her God, and her house inclines toward death—none who go to her return to the paths of life (Pro 2:17-19). Young men are warned to stay far from her door (Pro 5:8; 7:5), asking “why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman?” (Pro 5:20). Like a whore in a deep ditch, she waits to ensnare the simple (Pro 23:27-28). The strange woman represents the opposite of the virtuous wife—who builds up her household—but the strange woman destroys and leads men to hell (Pro 5:5; 7:27).

- 3) Pro 5:18-19; 12:4; 18:22; 19:13-14; 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15-16; 30:23—**Wife** ~950 BC

Proverbs contrasts two types of wives: the good and the contentious. The man who finds a good wife is assumed to have found favor from God (Pro 18:22), for a virtuous woman becomes a crown to her husband while a shameful one rots his bones (Pro 12:4). A prudent wife comes from the Lord as an inheritance more valuable than houses and riches (Pro 19:14). The wise man rejoices with the wife of his youth, finding lifelong satisfaction in her love (Pro 5:18-19).

Yet, ancient wisdom literature tends to characterize binary opposites. From this male perspective, a contentious, brawling, angry wife makes life so miserable that dwelling alone in a corner of the housetop or in the wilderness proves better than sharing a house with her (Pro 21:9, 19; 25:24). Her continual nagging resembles a constant dripping on a rainy day (Pro 27:15-16).

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This repetitive emphasis on quarrelsome wives (appearing six times) reveals both the male perspective of Proverbs' authors and the real tensions in ancient marriages where women had limited power yet could exercise verbal resistance. Notably, Proverbs offers no parallel warnings about contentious husbands, suggesting these proverbs reflect male anxieties about female speech and domestic control rather than balanced marital counsel.

4) Pro 6:26, 29, 32; 7:10-27; 23:27; 29:3; 30:20—**Whorish Adulterous Harlot(s)** ~950 BC

Proverbs warns against “*zō·nāh*” which the KJV translates into different words: harlot, whore, whoredom, whorish; prostitute, unfaithful, and commit fornication. Harlots represent both physical prostitution and spiritual unfaithfulness. In the latter case, it includes both women and men turning away from Israel’s covenant relationships with God and spouse to pursue temporary pleasure that leads to lasting ruin.

Proverbs also refers to a whorish woman who brings a man down to a piece of bread, and the adulteress hunts for his precious life (Pro 6:26). The harlot wears distinctive attire and operates with a subtle, deceptive heart (Pro 7:10). She becomes a deep ditch and narrow pit from which escape proves nearly impossible (Pro 23:27). The man who keeps company with harlots wastes his substance and brings grief to his father instead of joy (Pro 29:3).

These verses can be interpreted to denounce a breaking the law of chastity, or to denounce the women bound to whoredoms. However, across history, prostitution is most often not a profession of choice, but of slave labor. Even though Leviticus 19:29 commands against selling one’s daughter into prostitution, many women and girls historically had little choice in their paths into prostitution, which included:

1. **Debt slavery:** Families sometimes sold daughters to pay debts, resulting in some possibly ending up in prostitution.
2. **Cultic prostitution:** Some women served as temple prostitutes in Canaanite religions, which could have been interpreted as a religious role rather than purely economic.
3. **Economic desperation:** Widows, orphans, or women without family support might turn to prostitution to survive (similar to Tamar’s challenging position in Genesis 38, though she wasn’t actually a prostitute).
4. **Trafficking:** Foreign or “strange women” captured in war could be forced into various forms of servitude including prostitution.

The Bible’s warnings in Proverbs reads as though the prostitute is an active agent making choices (she “hunts,” she’s “subtle of heart”), but this may be the perspective of teaching young men about consequences rather than a complete picture of these women’s circumstances. Some may have chosen this as a profession, but most likely they were in the minority.

5) Pro 7:4; 9:1-12; 14:1—**Lady Wisdom** (Fictional) ~950 BC

Lady Wisdom personifies divine wisdom as a noble woman. She stands as the ultimate guide, offering life and understanding to all who will listen and follow her ways. She builds her house on seven pillars, prepares a feast, and sends her maidens to call from the city’s highest places (Pro 9:1-3). She invites the simple to turn aside, eat her bread, drink her wine, forsake foolishness, and live (Pro 9:4-6). Unlike the foolish woman, Lady Wisdom offers true understanding and life. She teaches that wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord and that those who find her multiply their days (Pro 9:10-11). Solomon counsels his son to call wisdom “sister” and understanding “kinswoman,” treating them as beloved family members (Pro 7:4).

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6) Pro 7:21, 25-27—**She and Her as Seductress** (Fictional) ~950 BC

Temptation is personified as a seductive woman who uses “fair speech” and “flattering” lips to entice the unwary (Pro 7:21). The imagery warns against yielding to enticements that lead away from righteousness, whether literal sexual sin or broader moral compromise.

Proverbs emphasizes internal vigilance: “Let not thine heart decline to her ways” (Pro 7:25). The heart’s inclination precedes outward action. Even “many strong men have been slain by her” (Pro 7:26), showing that those who seem spiritually robust can fall to persistent temptation.

The final warning is stark: “Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death” (Pro 7:27). This wisdom literature uses gendered imagery common to ancient Near Eastern instruction, teaching that what appears attractive leads ultimately to spiritual destruction and separation from covenant obedience.

7) Pro 9:13-18—**Foolish Woman** (Fictional) ~950 BC

The foolish woman personifies folly itself, serving as the opposite of Lady Wisdom who also calls out from the high places of the city (Pro 9:3, 14). This woman is loud, simple, and knows nothing, yet she sits prominently at her house door in the city’s high places, competing with Wisdom for the attention of passersby (Pro 9:14-16). The foolish woman represents the seductive appeal of sin and ignorance, offering immediate pleasure but delivering destruction.

8) Pro 11:16—**Gracious Woman** (Fictional) ~950 BC

A gracious woman gains and keeps honor through her character, just as strong men retain riches through strength. Her graciousness proves as valuable as wealth, since honor outlasts material possessions. Unlike the contentious wife (Pro 21:9) or strange woman (Pro 2:16-19) who bring shame, the gracious woman builds lasting reputation and respect in her community, demonstrating that feminine virtue holds its own power and worth.

9) Pro 11:22—**Fair Woman** (Fictional) ~950 BC

The proverb teaches that outward appearance means little without inner character. This fair woman possesses physical beauty but lacks discretion, making her like a gold ring in a pig’s snout—which was an unclean animal. It represents something precious placed where it cannot be appreciated. Her beauty becomes wasted and even absurd without the wisdom and good judgment to match it.

10) Pro 14:1—**Wise Woman Building her House** ~950 BC

“Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.”
(*See *Pro 9:1-12*)

11) Pro 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15-16—**Brawling/Contentious Woman** ~950 BC

In Hebrew the same word, *madon*, is repeated, even though the KJV uses brawling and contentious. She makes home life so unbearable that living alone in a roof corner or wilderness proves preferable to sharing a house with her (Pro 21:9, 19; 25:24). Her constant quarreling resembles annoying rain drips that never stop (Pro 27:15). Hiding her proves as impossible as restraining wind or grasping oil—her contentious nature cannot be concealed or controlled (Pro 27:16). She contrasts sharply with the prudent wife from the Lord (Pro 19:14).

12) Pro 27:27; 30:19, 23; 31:15—**Maidens** ~950-700 BC

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Maidens appear in Proverbs as household servants who require provision and care. They represent young girls or damsels who are still virgins but often enroute to marriage (Pro 30:19, 23). A prosperous household has enough goats' milk to maintain its maidens (Pro 27:27), and the virtuous woman rises early to give portions to her maidens along with the rest of her household (Pro 31:15). Maidens work under a parent or master and depend on them for sustenance.

13) Pro 30:23—Odious Women and Handmaid Heir to Mistress ~950 BC

This verse appears in a list of four things the earth “cannot bear,” describing situations that create intolerable social upheaval. An “odious woman when she is married” refers to a contentious wife who makes her household miserable. The term “odious” suggests someone actively unpleasant or has a detestable character, whose marriage amplifies rather than restrains her difficult nature. The proverbial warning to this contentious woman is that her husband may prefer to live with the maid than the odious woman. It emphasizes the importance of humility, kindness, and respect in relationships.

14) Pro 31:1-3—Mother of King Lemuel Advice on Women~950 BC

An unnamed queen mother instructs her son, King Lemuel, in royal wisdom. The term “*massa*/prophecy,” can mean an oracle or weighty instruction, indicating the authoritative nature of her maternal teaching. Her repeated question, “What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?” (Pro 31:2), expresses urgent maternal concern and establishes her intimate relationship with him from conception through consecration.

Her primary warning addresses destructive propensity of those with power: “Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings” (Pro 31:3). She cautions against allowing inappropriate or adulterous relationships with women that offend God and compromise his judgment. History records numerous kings whose reigns suffered through unwise marriages or sexual entanglements—Solomon himself being a prime example (1 Kgs 11:1–4).

This passage demonstrates that royal mothers held significant influence in ancient Near Eastern courts, serving as advisors who shaped their sons' character and governance. Her words, preserved in scripture, affirm women's roles as teachers of wisdom and guardians of righteous leadership.

15) Pro 31:10-31—Virtuous Woman/Wife ~950-700 BC

The virtuous “woman/*ishshah*/wife” of Proverbs 31 stands as the biblical ideal of womanhood. Her price exceeds rubies, and her husband's heart safely trusts in her (Pro 31:10-11). She is a hard worker who prepares wool and flax to clothe her family so they need not fear snow (Pro 31:13, 21). She wears fine linen and purple, but more than fabrics, strength and honor clothe her, and she rejoices in time to come (Pro 31:22, 25). She rises early to feed her household, including her servants (Pro 31:15).

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She is a businesswoman and horticulturist who buys fields with her earnings and plants vineyards (Pro 31:16). Her merchandise proves good, and her candle burns late into the night as she spins thread (Pro 31:18-19). She makes tapestries and sells garments and girdles to merchants (Pro 31:22, 24). She is also generous and stretches out her hands to the poor and needy (Pro 31:20). She opens her mouth with wisdom, speaks the law of kindness, and watches over her household without idleness (Pro 31:26-27).

She is a mother, and her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband praises her and he is known in the gates among the elders (Pro 31:28, 23). Though many daughters have become virtuous, this woman's sterling example excels because of her amazing works (Pro 31:31). The author has found favor to be deceitful and beauty vain. He honors a woman who respects and honors God (Pro 31:29-30).

16) Ecc 2:7—**Female Slaves** ~950-700 BC

“I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me.” (*See *Ex 21:7-11*)

17) Ecc 2:8—**Women Singers** ~950-700 BC

“I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.” (*See *2 Sam 19:35; *2 Chr 35:25; *Neh 7:67; *Ecc 12:4*)

18) Ecc 5:15; 11:5—**Mother's Womb** ~950-700 BC

The Preacher used the mother's womb to illustrate life's realities. Humans enter naked from their mother's womb and return to earth the same way, taking nothing from their labor (Ecc 5:15). The womb also demonstrates God's mystery—just as no one understands how spirit enters or bones grow in the womb, no one can comprehend all God's works (Ecc 11:5). The womb represents both human mortality and divine mystery, showing life begins and ends beyond our control, but all within God's hands.

19) Ecc 7:26-28—**A Woman Whose Heart is Snares and Nets** ~950-700 BC

The Preacher's cynicism here stands as a warning against the seductive trap of immoral women, not a condemnation of all womankind. Those who please God escape this specific type of woman, but sinners fall into her trap. This woman resembles the strange woman of Proverbs 2:18-19 and 7:27. The Preacher's harsh conclusion—finding one upright man among a thousand but not one woman among all—reflects his own bitter experience rather than a universal truth about women. We find hundreds of righteous women, named and unnamed, in scripture.

20) Ecc 9:9—**Wife** ~950-700 BC

“Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.” (*See *Pro 5:18-19*)

21) Ecc 12:4—**Daughters of Song** ~950-700 BC

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The Preacher used this phrase while describing old age and declining faculties—when “the daughters of musick shall be brought low.” This likely means either that elderly people lose their ability to hear music clearly, or that female singers’ voices fade and weaken with age. The phrase appears in a poetic passage describing how aging affects every aspect of life.