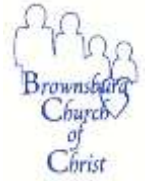




# Women of Wisdom

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## Introduction:

The way some people talk, you would think the sum total of the Bible's presentation of womanhood could be found in three passages: **Ephesians 5:22-24**; **I Corinthians 14:34-35**; **I Timothy 2:11-15**. We make no apologies for these verses because God is our Lord. We are not willing to go out on our own because God's verses do not fit with our culture's ideals. Rather, we will do what He says because we believe His way is best. Further, we recognize as long as Adam is the one who was created first and Eve is the one who was deceived, these verses govern us. They were not a matter of cultural service, but of the creation order. These verses do not talk about the worth of women, but about their roles in the family and congregation. We each have different roles and must work to fulfill ours as God decreed. Sadly, because these verses do not mesh with modern feeling, many have falsely accused the Bible of being anti-woman. This is patently false. The Bible does not present women as backwards, ignorant, worthless decorations to hang on the arms of men. Granted, the Bible does present negative pictures of sinful women as it also presents negative pictures of sinful men. Keep that in mind when you read passages like **Proverbs 19:13**; **27:15**. These passages do not tell us what women are like, but sinful women. That is like **Proverbs 26:1**, which does not talk about all men, but foolish men. Let's look at a handful of righteous, wise women. This will give us a better idea of God's perspective on womanhood, providing us with a better perspective.

## Discussion:

### I. Wise and righteous women of the Bible.

- A. *Esther*: Can any look at Bible women neglect Esther? When God's people are threatened by the accuser (Haman), she is convinced to do something about it. First, she implements a three day fast. On the third day, she went into the presence of the king to identify the accuser of her people. In the moment the accuser thought he was most victorious, he suffered his greatest defeat (**Esther 4-5**). Are you getting the picture created here? Esther is a female shadow of Jesus Christ Himself. Esther is an antitype that foreshadows the ultimate victory God's people had over the accuser through the ultimate deliverer, Jesus. Esther is not a backwards, ignorant, worthless decoration for the men of the story. She is the deliverer.
- B. *Rahab* and *Ruth*: These were not only women, but foreign women. That is, they were not Jews. In **Joshua 2**, none of the men of Jericho were willing to recognize what Rahab did—help the Israelites and be saved from destruction. Rahab delivered not only herself, but her whole family (**Joshua 2:11-14**; **6:25**). Ruth, a Moabitess, was willing to give up all to follow her Jewish mother-in-law (**Ruth 1:16-17**). The reason I tie these two women together is found in **Matthew 1:5**. Both were in the lineage of Jesus. These foreign women were blessed because of their wisdom in following God. The Old Testament message was clear. If God would bless even these foreigners when they wisely submitted to God, how much more will He bless His people when they follow Him? These women were not worthless, but wise and honored by God.
- C. *Abigail*: In **I Samuel 25**, we meet Abigail, who would end up as the wife of David. Her husband Nabal was a fool. Despite David's protection of Nabal's shepherds, Nabal would not help David. Abigail went to David and appeased his anger. She saved her husband from David's wrath and David from taking vengeance. Of course, Nabal's folly brought God's judgment and he died. We must give serious consideration to who was wise and who was foolish here.
- D. *Wise Woman of Abel*: Abel had apparently been considered a city filled with wisdom (**II Samuel 20:18**). But on one particular day, they were foolish, except for one wise woman. Sheba, a Benjamite, had rebelled against King David. He was easily overcome and fled to the city of Abel. Joab, David's commander, besieged the city. Because of this one man, an entire city was going to be destroyed. One woman realized they should find out what Joab wanted. In **II Samuel 20:20-21**, Joab explained he only wanted Sheba, but he was willing to tear down the city to get him. The wise woman went back to the people and they wisely followed her counsel. They cut off Sheba's head and tossed it over the wall. Their city was delivered because they heeded the counsel of one wise woman.
- E. *Deborah* and *Jael*: According to **Judges 4:4**, Deborah was a prophetess and a judge in Israel. She had called Barak to step up to the plate and be a deliverer, but Barak couldn't handle the pressure. He would only go if Deborah would go with him. In **Judges 4:9**, she explained because Barak had balked, he would not receive the glory. Instead, Sisera would be delivered into the hand of a woman. That woman wasn't Deborah, however. It was Jael,

the wife of Heber. In **Judges 4:17-22**, Jael killed Sisera and delivered the Israelites in her wisdom. Jael was honored as most blessed of women in **Judges 5:24**.

- F. *Proverbs 31 Woman*: “An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels” (**Proverbs 31:10, ESV**). Here is a woman that provides for her household’s future. She works in real estate. She has wisdom in the marketplace both buying and selling. She runs her home smoothly. Her family is prepared for trouble. Her husband is known in the gates because of her support. Her children rise up and bless her. Her husband praises her. Her works praise her in the gates. That is, in the center of the city’s life and wisdom, this woman is known and praised.
- G. No doubt, we could look at other examples. We haven’t even looked at the New Testament accounts of Mary the mother of Jesus or Mary Magdalene and others. But can we not see women are held in high esteem by God and demonstrably honored in the Bible?

## II. Lessons for us.

### A. Lessons for women:

1. *Pursue righteousness*: Please keep in mind these honored women were not the contentious women of **Proverbs 19:13; 27:15**. These were righteous women who pursued the glory of God. If you wish to be a woman God honors and people praise, pursue righteousness.
2. *Seek wisdom*: These were women of wisdom. All the statements about folly among men in **Proverbs** apply to womanhood as well. Abigail, the woman at Abel and the **Proverbs 31** woman sought and made use of wisdom. Notice **Proverbs 31:26**. Keep in mind the statement made in **Proverbs 31:16**. This woman gave consideration before acting. That is the beginning of wisdom. Don’t act rashly. Take time. Give thought. Follow wisdom.
3. *Be a helper*: None of the women mentioned were seeking their own glory. Esther was submitting to Mordecai and helping her people. Rahab was helping her family. Ruth was submitting to her mother-in-law. Abigail was trying to save her husband. The woman of Abel was trying to help her city. Deborah was helping Barak. Jael was helping Israel. The **Proverbs 31** woman does good to her husband all the days of his life. Our culture teaches women to seek their own glory. The Bible teaches you to attain glory by being a wise and righteous helper of others, especially your husband and family.

### B. Lessons for men:

1. *Respect your wife’s wisdom*: Women are different from men. They perceive differently, think differently, reason differently, and communicate differently. While there are exceptions in both genders, in general, we might say men are more sequential and women are more intuitive. Men think about step A which leads to point B from which we draw conclusion C. Women drink in bigger pictures and intuit a conclusion. Often, they have a “feeling” and cannot express exactly why. But their intuitions are often right. We men have a tendency to discount our wives’ wisdom because it cannot be laid out in a sequential order which we claim is logical. We make a grave mistake when we do. How logical was it to help David the renegade against King Saul in **I Samuel 25**? Yet, Abigail could intuitively see the mistake her husband had made. Abigail became queen and Nabal, the fool, died. We must not disrespect our wives’ wisdom because it is different from ours. Rather, we must respect it. Her intuitive wisdom can perceive what our sequential logic sometimes cannot. Men, we need to remember when God chose to personify wisdom, He used a woman (**Proverbs 1:20**).
2. *Seek your wife’s counsel*: How many men were in the wise city of Abel when Sheba fled there in **II Samuel 20**? Yet, it was only when they followed the wisdom of the woman of Abel that the city was saved. How might Nabal’s fate have been different if he had consulted his wife first? Sadly, too many of us think we must be all wise and make all decisions from start to finish without any wise counsel from our wives. No doubt, we can make some decisions on our own. But if we respect our wives’ wisdom, we will seek their counsel. In the end, we are the leaders, we will make the decision, and we will give account for it. But why would we make a decision without seeking the counsel of one of the greatest sources of wisdom God has given us? According to **Proverbs 12:15**, the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but the wise man listens to advice or seeks counsel. Men, let us not be fools.
3. *Allow your wife to help*: We know **Genesis 2:18**, which provides the over-arching principle of the woman’s role in the family. Eve was created to be a helper, a partner. Sadly, most men don’t want a helper, they want a servant. They have taken the wife as helper to mean the man decides what he wants and then expects the wife to be his lackey to accomplish it. No wonder so many today rebel against God’s plan for women. They think the Bible supports the misguided men who do not understand the roles of either husband or wife as taught in the Bible. Men, our headship is meted out in service to and sacrifice for our wives and children (**Ephesians 5:25**). Our headship means leading our family in the direction that is best for our family, not for us. With that goal in mind, allow your wife to be the helper God intended her to be. Don’t push her into the role of pawn;

let her be your partner. Yes, as we have said, you are the head. In the end, the decision is yours and you will be the one who gives account. Don't you want all the wise help you can get so you can give account for good things when you stand before God in judgment? Having studied these things, I can't help but think about **I Timothy 3:2** and **Titus 1:6**. Why must an elder be the husband of one wife? Was it to prove he could be a good manager of his home? No, that was why he is supposed to be a father. Is it possible the bishop must be married because when he has no wife to help him his wisdom is incomplete? Just something to think about.

### **Conclusion:**

The Bible is not anti-women. Certainly, the Bible presentation of women's roles in the church and family does not correspond with our culture's desires. But God, through the Bible, highly honors the sisters among us. We must as well. Let us all learn the lessons we can glean from these wise women of the Bible. Women, be the righteous, wise helpers God intended. Men, respect and seek counsel from the helper God has given you. Her worth is far above jewels. Make sure you treat her that way.