

Mother's Day '24
Proverbs 31:10-31
"A Godly Woman"

Introduction

Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes, but rather what is inside the heart — the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

1 Peter 3:3-4

Today, I'm going to be breaking one of my own rules. (It's an unwritten rule. I guess it'll be ok!) But as a rule, I do not preach "special day" sermons. Generally speaking, I just pick a book of Scripture and teach it all the way through. I'm not a good topical preacher. I just like to teach The Word, and I am much more comfortable doing so in this style. Everyone has to be who they are, and that's just who I am. However, after studying **1 Peter** intensively for the current *Bible* study we are doing, I was really struck by his commentary about the value of a godly woman. And since today is mother's day... I thought maybe, just this once, I should depart from the norm and discuss what God's Word has to say on the subject.

Peter says that "**the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit** (of a woman) **is of great worth in God's sight**" (**1 Peter 3:4**). So exactly what did he mean by that? And is there someplace in The Scriptures, where these qualities are described in more detail? I believe we actually can see what he is speaking of in the book of *Proverbs*, namely **Proverbs 31**, which has been subtitled for us in our *Bibles* as "*In Praise of a Wife of Noble Character.*"

There are some scholars who dispute the authorship of what has been called "*The Proverbs 31 Woman.*" Some attribute the writing to a king named Lemuel, a figure we know virtually nothing about from the writings of Scripture. Others attribute the passage to King Solomon himself, who penned a great deal of the book. Still others claim that Solomon and Lemuel are one and the same, and that "Lemuel", whose name means "*devoted to God*", was possibly a nickname that Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, had given to him. Others still try and attribute the writing to King Hezekiah, and so on. So, truth be told, we have no idea who penned the words, but we can rest assured that they were inspired by The Holy Spirit, and in the end that is all we really need to know.

The passage about a godly wife in **Proverbs 31** is actually an acrostic, with each verse (**10-31**) beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet and continuing in succession. This was a common practice for poetic writing at the time of Kings David and Solomon. And to find a similar pattern, we can look to **Psalms 119**, penned by King David. Poetry was often written this way in order to make it easier for the reader to commit the verses to memory.

So, as we look today to God's definition of a godly wife, let us take the time to praise the mom's in our lives who live out these verses each and every day. For one thing is certain, the only truly beautiful woman is a godly woman. There are many in this world who are physically attractive, but the "inner beauty" of which Peter (and Solomon) spoke of is a rare and precious thing indeed. Physical beauty fades with time, but inner beauty increases all the more so long as we continue in our closeness with God. For He alone is the source of all that is beautiful and good.

I am also breaking with my traditional three point sermon today (I feel like such a rebel!), for this particular sermon has *four* points! They are, according to Scripture, the very things which make up a woman of noble character's crowning glory: Her *Worth*, Her *Works*, Her *Wisdom* and *Watchfulness*. As we discuss these attributes this morning, please take the time to think of the godly women in your life, and honor them on this special day. For as I heard a preacher once say, "The time to give people roses is while they are still alive and can enjoy their fragrance." This is indeed a true statement! So let us not become complacent in our giving of honor to the wives and mom's that God has so graciously provided. For where would we be without them? And as Peter would remind us, to neglect our duty in giving them the honor they so richly deserve could very well cause our prayers to be hindered (**1 Peter 3:7**). So, bearing this verse in mind, I would like to take a moment to wish all the mom's out there a "*Happy Mother's Day*", and we thank God for each and every one of you!

Her Worth (vs. 10-12)**Who can find a wife of noble character?****She is far more precious than jewels.****The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will not lack anything good.****She rewards him with good, not evil, all the days of her life. Proverbs 31:10-12**

First things first, a wife and mother of noble character is a priceless treasure indeed. Far more valuable than jewels, according to the Scriptures. And what is it exactly makes her so valuable? I think the next line answers the question. It is her *character*. The verse says that her husband can trust her with all his heart. Can I just say here that I believe the greatest human attribute (in my own personal and humble opinion) is loyalty. I cannot even begin to tell you how many people over my lifetime have let me down. Loyalty, someone who will stand by your side through thick and thin, now that is a rare person to know.

So many these days seem to have no problem standing in the presence of God and promising their so-called soul mate, “*I do*”... that is... until they *don't*. Marriage vows these days have become as disposable as Dixie Cups, it seems. And quite frankly, it is shameful that the divorce rate among “so-called” Christians is virtually the same as it is in the lost world.

Can I just mention something in regard to character here? A person who will lie to their spouse and stand before God and lie to *Him*, won't have the slightest bit of difficulty in being dishonest in every other facet of their lives. I wouldn't trust a person like this as far as I could throw them; much less hire them to work for me, or to watch over my grandkids! So yes, loyalty matters. Having someone that you know will stand by you through good times and bad, through sickness and in health, for richer for poorer, you better believe that matters!

So a wife of Nobel character is someone that a husband can trust with all his heart. And when that part of a man's life becomes a settled issue, then as *The Scriptures* promise, he will not lack anything good. Marriage is a team sport, and it only works when the whole team shows up to play! Whatever happened to people who lived their lives in order to serve someone else, rather than their own personal whims and fleeting desires? Maybe we should consider trying honest-to-goodness Christianity, I hear its catching on in Thailand!

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interest of others. Philippians 2:3-4

And maybe, just maybe, we should abandon the whole “*me first*” mentality and get back to doing everything that we can to take care of others instead. Just a thought. I can tell you this firsthand, the most miserable people that I know are the ones that sit around and contemplate their own so-called “*personal well-being*” day in and day out! If a marriage works like it's supposed to, then the man lives to please his wife, and likewise, the wife lives to please her husband. That's what *loyal* people do. And guys, if you happen to be married to one, you should not only praise them for it daily, but thank God for her as well. Because a loyal heart is a rare and precious gem indeed.

Her Work (vs. 13-25)**She selects wool and flax and works with willing hands.****She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from far away.****She rises while it is still night and provides food for her household and portions for her female servants.****She evaluates a field and buys it; she plants a vineyard with her earnings.**

She draws on her strength and reveals that her arms are strong.
She sees that her profits are good, and her lamp never goes out at night.
She extends her hands to the spinning staff, and her hands hold the spindle.
Her hands reach out to the poor, and she extends her hands to the needy.
She is not afraid for her household when it snows,
for all in her household are doubly clothed.
She makes her own bed coverings; her clothing is fine linen and purple.
Her husband is known at the city gates, where he sits among the elders of the land.
She makes and sells linen garments; she delivers belts to the merchants.
Strength and honor are her clothing, and she can laugh at the time to come.

Proverbs 31:13-25

I find it only fitting that in this book of *Proverbs* more ink is utilized in describing the “works” of a noble woman than all her other attributes. It is fitting because God has a lot to say about laziness in the book of *Proverbs*. A quick perusal of its pages will reveal to you that God is not a big fan of slothfulness. In fact, He despises it. So anyone, whom God would honor and bless, will without question be a hard worker. This truth is borne out in both *The Old Testament* and *The New*. For example:

Now we command you, brothers and sisters, in the Name of our LORD Jesus Christ, to keep away from every brother or sister who is idle and does not live according to the tradition received from us. For you yourselves know how you should imitate us: We were not idle among you; we did not eat anyone’s food free of charge; instead, we labored and toiled, working night and day, so that we would not be a burden to any of you. It is not that we don’t have a right to support, but we did it to make ourselves an example to you so that you would imitate us. In fact, when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: “if anyone isn’t willing to work, he should not eat.”

2 Thessalonians 3:6-10

So likewise, a godly woman will be a hard worker. According to the writer in *Proverbs*, she rises early and works until late at night (**vs. 15,18**). I can still remember when I was young and living at home with my folks, not once, did I get out of bed before my mom, and not once did I get into bed later than she. She was always working to provide what we needed. That’s what a godly woman does. She puts the needs of her husband and children ahead of her own.

I love the verse that compares her to a merchant ship bringing food from afar! Most people do not even understand what that verse means. Some might even consider it unflattering to be compared to a massive ship! But just imagine living in a remote place, where everything that sustains your life has to be brought in on merchant supply ships. Can you imagine when the food pantry started running low, you would look out your window and see that great ship filled with all good things sailing into the harbor! That is what a godly woman is like to her family. As the old saying goes, “*she is a sight for sore eyes.*” For were it not for her labors, then the family would cease to exist. Thank God for our moms who provided for our needs like a merchant ship bringing goods from afar!

I also love the verses that say she isn’t afraid of the winter snow, because she has already thought ahead and provided the warm clothes that her family needs. And that she can laugh at the difficult days to come, because she has already thought ahead to prepare her family to face them (**vs. 21, 25**).

The passage also says that due to her diligent working, her husband is an elder at the city gates. In ancient times, those in leadership would sit at the city gates and make decisions for the entire community. Much like a town council of sorts would do today. Now notice the correlation. Because the godly woman is able to take care of herself and her family, her husband is able to serve the needs of others. Can I tell you, as a pastor, I really appreciate this verse a lot. Because it is the pastor’s wife, that makes it possible for him to minister!

I have known a lot of really good preachers in my life. But sadly a lot of them weren't very effective in building churches, because they were hindered from doing so because of their wives. In short, they didn't marry well. And as a result, much of the good that they tried to do was nullified by the turmoil caused by their wives. Without a godly wife, a man can not be effective in doing what God would have him do. This is why a noble wife is so very valuable to any who would want to be in service to God and to others! So praise The LORD for the hard working wife and mom, who sees to everyone else's needs ahead of her own.

Her Wisdom (vs. 26)

Her mouth speaks wisdom, and loving instruction is on her tongue. Proverbs 31:26

Short but to the point, this verse speaks of the wise counsel offered up by the godly wife and mother. True wisdom has but one source, and that is God Himself. The book of *Proverbs* makes this fact abundantly clear. The word translated "loving" is actually *chesed*, the Hebrew word for grace! And it is by God's own grace that we are given His own wisdom to guide our way.

For The LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up success for the upright; He is a shield for those who live with integrity so that He may guard the paths of justice and protect the way of His faithful followers. Proverbs 2:6-8

This world has its own kind of wisdom, but it is only godly wisdom that can lead us to the paths of righteousness. Every godly woman is connected to this source of wisdom. A person who lives prayerfully and is continuously searching The Word of God for guidance, becomes a wellspring of wise counsel as a result. Thank God for the wives and mothers among us who give advice based upon the Scriptures, rather than the latest trend in dime-store psychology. One must be cautious as to the voices that he chooses to listen. There is a world of advise available out there, but very little wise counsel.

Who among you is wise and understanding? By his good conduct he should show that his works are done in the gentleness that comes from wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don't boast and deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretense. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who cultivate peace. James 3:13-18

In short, worldly wisdom values self above all other, and godly wisdom values God's Word and others above self. And the noble wife and mother who relies upon The Word for her guidance will become a true source of wisdom for others. Listen to her counsel, for she desires only the best for you.

Her Watchfulness (vs. 27-31)

She watches over the activities of her household and is never idle. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also praises her: "Many women have done noble deeds, but you surpass them all!"

Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting.
but a woman who fears the Lord will be praised.
Give her the reward of her labor, and let her works praise her at the city gates.

Proverbs 31:27-31

The more that I have meditated upon the last two points of this message over the past few days, the more I have come to understand that wise counsel and watchfulness are like twin siblings that walk through this life forever hand in hand. For it is our watchfulness that prompts us to offer counsel. To care about another person is to be deeply concerned with each and every path they endeavor to take.

One thing that I have learned about parenting in my so-called "golden years"; you never really stop being a parent. Oh, I am sure that when Sandi and I were younger we longed for the days when our children were grown and able to fend for themselves. But even when they leave the nest, a parent is still ever vigilant. We look out for our kids until the day that we die I suppose, for whatever God puts within us that make us parents in the first place never really dissipates.

So, as we never cease to be watchful, we must also learn a difficult lesson. And that lesson is learning when *not* to speak up. So many times as adults with grown children, we see them heading off in directions that we feel desperately need some type of immediate course correction. But in order to acquiesce to the voices of wisdom and prudence, we remain silent. For we have learned that often the most despicable counsel is that which is unsolicited. So we quietly watch and pray, trusting that the godly counsel we have given in the past will serve to direct the paths of our beloved children as they find their own way in this darkened world. After all God has promised us in this same book of *Proverbs*:

Start a youth out on his way; even when he grows old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

Oh, how we older parents often cling to this verse!

So the godly woman may be a wellspring of wise counsel, but she always offers it with gentleness and compassion, knowing when to speak and when to listen, for this is God's way. I imagine that our Heavenly Father feels much the same as He watches us daily struggle with one decision after another, wishing that we would come to Him for guidance, so that He could help us avoid the pitfalls that only He can see. But He patiently watches and waits for us to come to Him. He doesn't force His will upon us. For this is how a loving Father... loves!

This wonderful Proverb ends with the godly woman's husband and children praising her for all she is and does. They rise up and call her "*blessed*". Anyone who has such a godly wife and mother knows this praise is well deserved and oft times overdue. So let us remember to give these precious women roses, while they are still around to enjoy their sweet fragrance. For they indeed are worthy of our highest honor. Physical beauty is fleeting, but inner beauty is everlasting. So men, treat the godly women in your life as the royalty that they are. And as a result, you may just find... you will have a more effective prayer life as a result! (**1 Peter 3:7**).

Again, a most blessed and happy Mother's Day to all.

TRUTH!!!