

Theme: A Virtuous Woman

Proverbs 31:1, 10-12, 25-31 (NKJV)

¹ The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him:...¹⁰ Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. ¹¹ The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. ¹² She does him good and not evil All the days of her life...²⁵ Strength and honor are her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come. ²⁶ She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness. ²⁷ She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. ²⁸ Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: ²⁹ "Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all." ³⁰ Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. ³¹ Give her of the fruit of her hands, And let her own works praise her in the gates.

Today is Mother's Day—a day that we set aside to show our appreciation and love for the women who are mothers, grandmothers, and wives. This appreciation, of course, should be shown to our mothers, and to God, who gave them to us, each and every day of our lives, but it is nice that our society has set aside a day and devoted it entirely to them. And yet, ironically, motherhood has also been vastly underappreciated by our society, and the importance of being a mother seems to be vastly undervalued. When you think about your mother (or stepmother, or grandmother, or aunt or whomever it was that raised you) do you appreciate her value and importance in your life? Some of the greatest men in history certainly did! Abraham Lincoln put it very well when he said, *"All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel Mother."* George Washington once said, *"My mother was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her."*

More importantly look at the importance God places on motherhood. **Proverbs 31** is a chapter in which God describes the qualities of a **Virtuous Woman**, which includes a description of the characteristics of a Godly wife and mother (Note: the Hebrew word for “woman” can also mean “wife” depending on the context. The King James Version of the Bible translates this phrase in **v. 10 “virtuous woman.”**).

In the first verse of this chapter we are told that these are the inspired words of **King Lemuel (v. 1)**. We don't know anything about this king, but he must have been wise because he obviously listened to his “mamma!” This chapter is a recounting of **“the utterance which his mother taught him” (v. 1)**. This woman was obviously filled with godly wisdom. Her words in this chapter and our text have much to say to women and men, young and old, married and unmarried, to mothers and to those who have no children.

What makes a **Virtuous Woman** according to these words from God? One of the first things that stands out as you read through this chapter of **Proverbs** is that she is a hard worker (I encourage you all to read through this entire chapter on your own this week). In fact, if you read the verses of this chapter that we skipped over you would read that the **“virtuous wife [or “woman”] (v. 10)** that King Lemuel is describing is a woman who works several jobs and conducts business affairs outside the home (**cf. Proverbs 31:13-19**). The **Virtuous Woman** also gives to the needy, is concerned with the needs of others, is hard working, and above all does whatever she needs to do to take care of the needs of her children and family (**cf. Proverbs 31:20-24**). As **v. 27** of our text summarizes, **“She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness” (v. 27)**. Being a godly, **virtuous** wife and mother really has nothing to do with worldly “success” or “self-fulfillment.” Being a godly mother (or father, for that matter) requires much sacrifice and self-giving in order to be truly fulfilled and successful!

This is why King Lemuel wrote in **v. 10** of our text, **“Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies” (v. 10)**. But that's not referring to her material wealth or how much money she brings in. No, it refers to her value to her husband and her family. We read again from our text: **“The heart of her**

husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life...Strength and honor are her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness” (v. 11-12, 25-27). These Scriptures don’t speak about her exquisite beauty. They don’t refer to her athletic ability, talent, fame (or many of the things that the world values so highly) either. But what this section of Scripture does describe is a woman who above all is faithful to the LORD: **“Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised” (v. 30).** In the New Testament, the Apostle Peter, further describes what makes a woman “beautiful” and **virtuous** in the sight of God: **“Do not let your adornment be merely outward -- arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel -- rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Peter 3:3-4).**

A “gentle and quiet spirit,” however, does not mean *weakness*. Look again at our text and see what characterizes the **Virtuous Woman**: **“Strength and honor are her clothing...She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household” (v. 25-27).** Her **strength** is in the LORD. She is **honored** because of her godly actions and words. Her **wisdom** is based on His Word, and with self-sacrificing love and concern she **watches** over her household.

The **Virtuous Woman** will also share the greatest concern for her household by taking care of the spiritual needs of her children and sharing her faith in Christ with them. This is the greatest blessing and gift you can give to your children and to your family! Remember the words of our first Scripture reading this morning; what Paul wrote to the young pastor, Timothy? **“I remember your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am convinced that it also lives in you” (2 Timothy 1:5 EHV).** Timothy’s faith came from his mother and prior to that, his grandmother. They were faithful in passing down the greatest gift they could ever give Timothy: The gift of the Gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ. What a blessing that was to Timothy, and what a blessing he became to the Church!

Did you have a mother, stepmother, or perhaps a grandmother who brought you faithfully each Sunday to hear the Word of God in Sunday School and the worship service? If you did, think of what a blessing that was and what a difference she made in your faith-life.

Growing up in my family, my dad was a pastor (now retired), but don’t think for one second that my mom did not play an integral part in the growth of my faith life when I was young! She was the one who taught us to sing many Christian hymns and songs. She was the one who read us countless Bible stories, said prayers and sang songs with us each night before we went to sleep, and I know also prayed—and still does—for her children in her own room each night as well. She was our Sunday School teacher for a number of years, a great encourager of our faith--and was by far, way tougher than my dad when it came to memorizing our Bible passages for catechism class! (If we could pass my mom’s “quiz” the night before, we could easily pass dad’s the next day in class!)

Did you have a mother, or a “mother figure” like that in your life while you were growing up? If you do, thank her for it, if you can! Let her know how much you appreciate her and the faith she passed on to you. Verse 28 of our text says, **“Her children rise up and call her blessed.”** Children, “rise up and call your mother blessed” today. Husbands, is your wife a godly, **Virtuous Woman**? Show her your appreciation and love! That same verse goes on to say, **“Her husband also, and he praises her: ‘Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all.’”** Husbands, praise your wives today! Tell her that to you she excels above all other women!

What about you young women, and those of you who are not married? How do the words of this text apply to you? Well, are you striving to be a **Virtuous Woman**? Are you right now laying the foundation through

God's Word, prayer, and by following the example and advice of other godly mothers and wives in your lives for being a godly wife and mother *now*, or if you are not married yet, for the future husband and children that God may give you? Does the way you act and speak line up with the description of a **Virtuous Woman** of **Proverbs 31**? Are **"Strength and honor your 'clothing'" (v. 25)?** If not, what are your actions, words, and attitude saying about you as a woman? A godly, **Virtuous Woman** will attract a godly virtuous man. There is nothing more *beautiful* and *attractive* to a Christian man than a woman who **"fears the LORD"** and has a **"gentle and quiet spirit" (1 Peter 3:4)!** If the LORD chooses to bless you with children in the future will you make the sacrifice to raise and care for your children properly and **"bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4)?**

And how about you young men, and those who are not married who may be listening to or reading this sermon? How do the words of this text apply to you? Well, ask yourself, as you are looking for your future spouse, "What characteristics are you looking for in a woman?" Someone pretty? Physical attraction is usually high on the list. Someone fun? That's usually up there pretty high too. How about their faith and their character? For some reason that's not usually all that high up on the list, is it? Are you looking for a godly, **Virtuous Woman**? Are you looking for someone who will not only be a trustworthy (v. 11) helper as your wife, but also will care for your future children's spiritual and physical needs like your own mother did for you? Our text reminds you that a **Virtuous Woman** is a very special and precious gift from God; **"her worth is far above rubies" (v. 10).** Like a precious gem, a **Virtuous Woman** is rare and very valuable. Your choice of a spouse is quite possibly the most important decision you will make in your earthly life! Remember the words of our text, **"Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised" (v. 30).**

It's funny the things you remember your mom doing that showed her incredible love for you. Maybe you can remember a time when your mother made great sacrifices or kind, thoughtful gestures of love that let you catch a glimpse of just how much she really loves you. I often think of how my mom would always get up even in the middle of the night to be with us kids when we were sick. What a sacrificial—and often gross!—job that was. And my mom did it willingly every time no matter what time, day or night. It's moments like those that make you realize just how much your mother loves you; just how far she'll go for you. Who can love us like our mom? Who could show this kind of unconditional sacrificial love? Only a mother!

And yet, amazingly God loves us even more! In His Word, our heavenly Father says to each one of us, His children, **"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands" (Isaiah 49:15-16 ESV).** God loves us so unconditionally and so sacrificially that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to be born to a human mother Himself, and to stretch out His hands on the cross to take the "sickness" of our sins upon Himself. To forgive you for all the times you haven't been the perfect example of the **"Proverbs 31 woman"** as a wife or mother (and who can live up to that Biblical standard? No one. That's why Jesus lived a perfect life—for mothers, for wives, for all of us!). To forgive us for all the times we disobeyed, or dishonored, or underappreciated our mother, or our wife, or the women in our lives. Jesus endured that cross and suffered the pain and shame of death and hell that we deserved! He did all this to give us the gift of eternal life in heaven. And on top of that He has given us so many untold gifts and blessings in this life as well, including the gift of our own mother!

Has God put a **Virtuous Woman** in your life? Perhaps your mother, or your wife—or both! If you can today thank her and show her your appreciation, and above all thank God for this great gift! As one church sign once read: *"You are here by means of God and your mother; thank them both."* Today, on Mother's Day, we do thank and praise God, as we did in the first verse of our opening hymn:

*Now thank we all our God With heart and hands and voices, Who wondrous things hath done, In whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mother's arms Hath blessed us on our way With countless gifts of love And still is ours today! Amen.*
(Hymn 895 v. 1 LSB; 36 v. 1 TLH)