

Prov. 31:10-31 The Woman Who Fears the Lord

The writer of this Proverb, King Lemuel, is simply sharing what his mother taught him (v.1). This means that this Proverb is a woman's description of a woman's role. And these words make it to Scripture. I know of no other place that we find such truth about the value and worth of a wife and a mother that fears God. And to my knowledge, I've yet to preach these words. In fact, I'm not sure I've ever preached a sermon directly to mothers. So, I would like to take a look at this Proverb as we think about being a wife and a mother on this Mother's Day. The main truth for this Proverb is found in v. 30 which says, "**Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.**" Therefore, I have some truths about the woman who fears God.

1. She is valuable. Look at v. 10: "**An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.**" Here we see that the wife who fears God is valuable. It is interesting that the topic of the Book of Proverbs is wisdom. And wisdom is referred to in the feminine person. Over and over the Book says to us, "Get her. Seek her. Find her." Why, because there is nothing in this world you can compare with wisdom (Prov. 3:15). Even as we preach through James, we see that he says, "**Ask God for wisdom**" (James 1:5). Out of all the thing Solomon could ask for from God, he asks for wisdom. For its value is priceless. And in the same kind of way, the Bible speaks of finding such a woman for a wife.

2. She is hard to find. V. 10 also: "**An excellent wife who can find?**" In the Book of Ecclesiastes the great King Solomon was wise, but concerning his wives, he apparently didn't find one that he considered to be wise. He says in cp. 7:28: "**One man among a thousand I have found. But a woman among all these I have not found.**" Husbands, those of you who have found a wife that truly fears God, you have a valuable jewel that not many on this earth possess. By way of application, young boys, young men, do not settle for a girl that does not fear God. But instead find a wife that will love God with all her heart, her soul, her mind, and her strength. And if you do, you and those who come after you will be blessed beyond the value of precious jewels or riches.

3. She is trustworthy. V. 11: "**The heart of her husband trusts in her.**" This means she is a truth teller. She doesn't deceive others with her words or her actions. What she says she will do, she does. She is the kind of person who is not two-faced, telling one person something to their face, knowing this is not true. She is a "what you see is what you get" type person. And the person it most affects in her life is her husband. With ALL HIS HEART he trusts her, whether it is with finances, or decisions around the house, or any affair of the family.

4. She contributes to the worth of the family. We see this also in v. 11: "**He will have no lack of gain.**" It is interesting that this chapter says a lot about the wife's role in the financial integrity and stability of the household. Let me explain the context of these words. In those days when one army defeated another the victor carried off the spoils, the prizes of war when there was very little coinage. This was one way a husband could gain wealth for his family. Another way to gain wealth (which has always been the case) was/is to cheat and steal or even go into debt by borrowing or selling oneself into slavery for periods of time that would require the husband to

leave home. Well, these verses speak to the contribution of the wife financially so that her husband would not have to go off to war, or borrow money, or sell himself into slavery. Because of his wife, he “lacks no gain.” Now, this doesn’t necessarily mean that a wife must be the main breadwinner or even have to work outside the home (there is great freedom here). But the principle is clear. The wife who fears the Lord has an undying allegiance to her husband and her household. Whether she works outside the home or not, she is a good steward.

5. She does good to her husband. Look at v. 12 “**She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.**” This woman is merely being obedient to the Lord’s command to love her neighbor as she loves herself. And her most important neighbor in this world is her husband, She lives to love him, serve him, honor him, advance him, spoil him, and ease his life. She does him good! Often in this world, parents tend to spend more time and effort on their children than they do on their spouse. But remember that the institution of marriage was given before children. And one of the most assuring things in the world to a child is to know that mama and daddy love one another. And the proof as Andy Griffith says, is in the pudding.

6. She is hard-working and very beneficial to her family in provision. We see this throughout this chapter. Vv. 13-16: “**She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar. She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens. She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.**” Look also at vv. 21-22: “**She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet. She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.**” V. 24: “**She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant.**” And in v. 27: “**She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.**” Now, the context may be different. There are not too many of us working with wool and flax and bringing our food from afar. I’m not sure any of us have maidens. But, the principle is the same. She does not eat the bread of idleness. Thank God for a hard working wife! And what a blessing to her family.

7. She is wise. We see this throughout these verses. For everything she does cries out wisdom. It is interesting that the greatest book in the Bible about wisdom ends with a chapter on the wisdom of a wife and mother. Look at v. 18: “**She perceives that her merchandise is profitable . . .**” This implies she is wise with business. And v. 26: “**She opens her mouth with wisdom . . .**” When she speaks people listen; for they know that what she says is valuable. It is interesting that the greatest book in the Bible about wisdom ends with a chapter on the wisdom of a wife and mother.

8. She is kind. Look at v. 26: “**the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.**” The literal translation is “law” of kindness. And the emphasis is not on being kind when it is convenient, or when people are watching. NO, it is who she is. It is in her heart. Kindness flows from within. It is her law. And this kindness is displayed in her words. In this Proverb, think about all the people involved in this woman’s life: husband, children, neighbors, merchants and buyers, everyone on her trade route. And with all those people they receive words of kindness. An interesting tidbit from what I read on this verse. In ancient Jewish marriages, the volume of a woman’s voice was vital. She could even be divorced if she had a loud voice! The opposite of this kind of voice is rudeness, selfishness, gossip, slander, and the like. But the woman who fears the Lord is kind!

9. She is always ready to meet the needs of her family. Look at v. 18: “She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. I could talk about my wife on this one (and other truths as well), but I told her I wouldn’t do that in this sermon. My parents divorced when I was somewhat young. And I am sure they treated one another well for the most part of their time together. But, I really don’t remember much. But when I was in college I moved in with my grandparents who were both retired at much older. But, I was able to see, as a Christian young man, many of the good, biblical qualities, found in this Proverb (in both of them). And what a blessing. I remember my grandmother always getting up early to make lunch for me as I went to work, as she had done for her husband for many years. And when I worked on third shift, she would stay up late and fix my lunch the same. She was ALWAYS ready to meet the needs of the family. Such is the woman who fears the Lord!

10. She loves her neighbor. Look at v. 20: “**She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.**” This has always been so important in the Bible; those who fear God give help to those in need. To “open up the hand” in the Hebrew means action. To love one’s neighbor is not merely to say it, but to do it. Isn’t this what James said to us last week: “**Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.**” And such is the Prov. 31 woman. At this point, I must emphasize as Christians that God the Father loves his creation in the sending of the Son. There is no greater love than the sending of the Son. “**For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life.**” And when I see a picture of Jesus (even if there are no adequate pictures of him), he is usually standing with hands open, palms up, which is a picture of his love, his love of laying down his life on the cross. This was greatest love to “neighbor.

11. She is not fearful of what this world brings. Look at v. 21: “**She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet**” (double thickness). I think the general truth here is physical preparedness for difficult times. She is like the squirrel gathering nuts for the winter. Because of the work of this woman, her household is ready for snow, or drought, or sickness, or war, whatever may come. This means physical difficulties do not bring fear to her life. She is ready. But, I think there is more implied here because of the context of these words. I would say the woman who fears the Lord does not fear generally. She is not an anxious woman. Why? Well, we already know she is prepared physically. But spiritually, she is also prepared. In this regard her favorite words may be Psalm 121: “**I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.**”

12. She completes her husband. Look at v. 23: “**Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.**” I had a hard time narrowing this truth, because the overall picture of this verse is the male leadership of a city going out to the city gates with other leading men of the city to conduct business. And I picture a city where everyone knew one another. And this woman’s character was of such quality that the other men knew about this wife and mother.

And his success could not come without this woman. This is why I say “she completes her husband.” This makes perfect sense. After Adam named the animals and saw there was none like him, God caused him to sleep and from his side, he formed the woman and gave her to him as his wife, his helper, his companion, in the task of ruling this world. Wives, did you know that by your character, you complete and help you husband. And when you do, what a witness you are to the world!

13. She is a woman of beautiful character. We’ve seen this throughout, but v. 25 gives us beautiful picture. We read: “**Strength and dignity are her clothing . . .**” Ladies, think about your morning, any particular morning. You get up, you go to your closet and you pick something nice for the day, whether it is work clothes, or wedding clothes, or lounge around the house clothes. This is how you greet your day, with appropriate clothing. Well, that’s exactly how the woman who fears the Lord greets the days of her life. But the clothes she puts on does not hang in her closet. Instead, they are strength and dignity. She knows the important things in life are free. Strength and dignity are hers because she belongs to the King . . . the king of strength and dignity. And she has his character. And she knows what He is like for He has told her in his wonderful Word. When people see this woman, they don’t necessarily see beautiful clothing, but a beautiful heart filled with character. This truth captures the essences of this passage found in v. 30: “**Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.**”

Now, I must say with the entire revelation of God given to us in these days that this is a beautiful picture of the Gospel of Christ. God sent his Son so that sinners might be clothed with righteousness.” The woman (or the man) who fears the Lord is one who is clothed in righteousness. And God is the one who must clothe us. For we fall short of his glory. And our righteousness is filthy as a dirty rag. Rom. 3:21-25 says, “**But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.**” If you will be a person who fears God, you must be clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

14. Her children and her husband praise her. Look at v. 28: “**Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.**” Here, I see a very important truth. The emphasis is on the family, those who live with this woman. They know they truth. They see her every day and every night and every week and every month and every year. They know her character. A tree is known by its fruits. A woman who fears the Lord is known by her fruits.

What a beautiful passage of Scripture for mother’s day! Now, with these truths before us, I would like to make a few comments of application.

First, young men, these are the characters you look for in a wife. It is so interesting to me that this Proverb comes first from a mother and a wife which make their way to a son (King Lemuel, v. 1). As a woman, she knows what is important for her son. Young men, remember, “**charm is**

deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.” I would say, “make sure this is who you marry.”

Next, daughters who have such a mother, look to her as your model. Learn from her. Follow her ways. One day, if God wills, you will be a mother and wife.

Next, mothers make sure you make disciples of your children and family. We see this from v. 1. These are the words taught to her son. And this is our mission. “As you go, make disciples . . .” And the majority of your time will be spent with your family.

Next, character begins with the fear of God. “Why are these characteristics found in this woman?” These things do not just happen. They are found because of one of the most foundational truths in the Bible: the fear of God. This means a lot, but at the end of the day, this woman finds her strength as she worships the Lord God in everything she does. Whether she eats or drinks, she does all to the glory of God. She loves him. She trusts him. She adores him. And the motive of her heart in doing these things is not so that other people will see her or that her life will be more practical; her motive is love for God.

Finally this morning, we must remember that we are all at different places in the process of sanctification. I imagine ladies (and men for that matter) that when you see this picture, you say, “*Oh my, I am lacking so much.*” And from one perspective, you will always say this as you see the Prov. 31 woman. For you know your sins. You see your failures. And you are often harder on yourself than others are. And, this is the Word of God, which always says “be holy as I am holy.” And as James says, “Look into the Law of Liberty.” And God is so good to give us such a model. And on your own, you will never reach this model. And, as a body we are all at different places. But the key is the heart. How do you view this sermon, this model, these truths. No matter where you are, I must say the key is a heart of repentance and faith that looks unto Christ. This is how we fear God. And at the same time, these words from this sermon, and every sermon is a chance to learn and see ourselves and be encouraged and exhorted to look unto Christ, which is to fear God. And little by little you will become such a woman. If you are not a Christian, and you expect to become this woman, it will never happen. This only done by the Spirit by the power of God.

Let’s pray together.