

“How to be an Excellent Mother”

Proverbs 31

Good morning! Today, I'm going to preach a Mother's Day sermon, and some of you may be dreading it. You'd rather do eight loads of laundry or get a root canal than listen to a Mother's Day sermon! One group says, "I'm tired of getting hammered on Mother's Day with impossible expectations. I'd like to be the ideal mom, but I'm too busy raising children!" A second group says, "I'm a woman without children. Mother's Day is hard for me. It's awkward because I feel like I don't fit." To women in both groups, I want to say, "Relax! I don't want to add to the pressure or pain that comes from being a mom or not being a mom. I want to encourage you from the Bible about the impact you can make on the next generation-your children, if you're a mom, or your grandchildren, nieces, nephews, students, or neighbor kids who live next door. And this is a sermon not only for moms, but for dads, teachers, coaches, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and next-door neighbors of children. Men, this is not a day off when the sermon is just for mothers, so better listen! I want to share with all of you a lesson that wise moms and other influential people can teach the next generation. This sermon is relevant for all of us.

So, after that elaborate introduction, let me talk about moms.

You know, women are very intelligent creatures – if you don't believe it, listen to some quotes from famous women:

1. Erma Bombeck once said, “Never lend your car to anyone to whom you have given birth.”
2. Rosanne Barr said, “I’m not going to vacuum the house ‘til Sears makes one you can ride on.”

3. Dolly Parton said, “I’m not offended by all the dumb blonde jokes because I know I’m not dumb ... and I also know that I’m not blonde.”
4. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said, “In politics, if you want anything *said*, ask a man; if you want anything *done*, ask a woman.”
5. Zsa Zsa Gabor said, “I’m a marvelous housekeeper; every time I leave a husband, I keep his house.”

Today we’re going to learn about a very intelligent woman, in fact, she is a very excellent mother, – and we read about her in Proverbs 31. So, I’ve entitled this message, “**How to Be an Excellent Mother.**”

Would you please open your Bibles to Proverbs 31.

Now to understand this section of Scripture, you have to pay attention to the first verse:

The sayings of King Lemuel—an inspired utterance his mother taught him. –

Proverbs 31:1

Note that while Lemuel wrote this, it was something his *mother* taught him. So, this is a mother’s opinion of the kind of woman her son should look for. Many times, mothers don’t think the girls their sons marry are “good enough for him” so they set a pretty high standard! At the same time, the advice she gives her son is very good advice. And the very best place to learn the characteristics of a lovely lady or a fine female or a wonderful woman is in the last 22 verses of Proverbs 31. This material is not organized thematically and we’re going to have to jump around a bit to consider it. So, what can we learn from a Proverbs 31 woman as Lemuel’s mother taught him? First:

1. SHE EXCELS IN RELATIONSHIPS

As you read through these verses you discover that the excellent woman is *not* a one-dimensional person. She lives a multi-faceted life and she relates to others in at least four different kinds of relationships. First, she excels as a:

a. Praiseworthy Wife

I read the story of a man who is pulled over by a cop and the following conversation takes place:

Man: What's the problem officer?

Cop: You were going at least 75 in a 55 zone.

Man: No sir, I was going 65.

Wife: Oh Harry. You were going 80. (Man gives his wife a dirty look.)

Cop: I'm also going to give you a ticket for your broken tail light.

Man: Broken tail light? I didn't know about a broken tail light!

Wife: Oh Harry, you've known about that tail light for weeks. (Man gives his wife a dirty look.)

Cop: I'm also going to give you a citation for not wearing your seat belt.

Man: Oh, I just took it off when you were walking up to the car.

Wife: Oh Harry, you never wear your seat belt.

Man: Shut your mouth, woman!

Cop: Ma'am, does your husband always talk to you this way?

Wife: No, only when he's drunk.

That's one kind of wife. But the kind of wife that Lemuel's mother recommends is this:

A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: – Proverbs 31:10-12, 28 (NIV)

First, she is more valuable than precious jewels. Men, you need to recognize that your wife is more precious to you than gold, silver, diamonds or precious stones.

Next, it says that this kind of wife is good for her husband. Wives have the ability to either build up or tear down their husbands. A Proverbs 31 woman only brings him good. A great wife can make the difference whether or not a man succeeds in life. That's why he has full confidence in her and he praises her.

A few years ago, a man who was the president of a large insurance company was taking a trip with his wife. When they stopped to get gas, he visited the men's room and when he returned to his car, his wife was in a friendly conversation with the guy pumping the gas. When they got back in the car, his wife mentioned that the man pumping gas had been a teenage friend of hers and that they had even dated years ago. The husband smiled and said, "Just think, if you had married him, you'd be married to a gas station worker instead of the president of an insurance company." His wife smiled and said, "No, dear, if I'd married him, he'd be the president of an insurance company and you'd be pumping gas!"

The perfect woman excels in relationships because she is a praiseworthy woman. She is also a

b. Thoughtful Provider

She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family and portions for her female servants.– Proverbs 31:14-15

Here is a mother who provides food for her family, even if it means getting up early to do it. It says she goes great distances to get food. She couldn't hop into the car and head down to the nearest grocery store, either. She had to often walk great distances just to procure the food to feed her family. Here is the reward for being a great mother: *Her children arise and call her blessed.* (Proverbs 31:28a)

It's tough being a mother – one mother I heard of has three children all under the age of four. She said her schedule was pretty hectic until she bought a playpen. Now she says it's better because from 2 p.m. until 4 p.m. she climbs into the playpen so the kids can't get to her!

She is also a

c. Helpful Friend

She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.

Proverbs 31:20

What is a friend? A friend is someone who is there when you have a need. Here is a woman who looks around and sees poor people, needy people, and she is willing to be a friend. Notice it doesn't say that she gives money to the poor or clothing and food to the needy – it says, “she...reaches out her hands.” That means that she gives herself, she embraces those who are hurting, poor, and needy.

And she is a

d. Diligent Worker

This is a woman who has a career and in most of these jobs, it's obvious that she's the boss.

She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands... he considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.– Proverbs 31:13, 16-18, 24

Let's see what she can do. She is able to purchase raw material – She is in the real estate business and commercial agriculture because she inspects a field and buys it – she must have some operating capital – she plants a vineyard. Wow! What a businesswoman! She is a diligent worker.

What does she do with the wool and flax she bought in verse 13? She makes linen garments and sells them to merchants. She is in the wholesale tapestry business.

Some say that a woman's place is in the home but there are more verses that deal with this woman's business expertise than address her role as a mother and wife! She is a brilliant CEO of her own family of companies and yet she has time to be a great mom and wife.

Every woman works. I've learned through the years that the correct question to ask a woman is *not* "Do you work?" The correct question is, "Do you work outside the home?" BTW, do you know how much a mother is worth? According to insure.com, "If America's mothers were paid for their work around the home, they would have earned an annual salary of \$133,440 over the past year, according to Insure.com's Mother's Day Index for 2023". Men, we owe them a lot.

Now, for those who have made the choice to be full-time mothers and homemakers, I commend you for this choice; I believe there is no business more important than running a household. You are not paid but still you do the work. But for those of you who choose to work outside the home, I want you to know that you truly are a Superwoman.

Now, let's go to another area wherein an excellent woman excels.

2. SHE EXCELS IN ABILITIES

a. She Creates

In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers. ... She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple. ... She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes. . –

Proverbs 31:19, 22, 24

Here is a woman who has the ability to take basic materials and to create something beautiful from them.

What a woman! She does so much of this that not only does her family have enough so that they are never cold; she even sells some of her products to the merchants!

b. She Plans ahead

When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. ... She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. – Proverbs 31:21, 27

There are a number of references in this chapter to thinking about the future. When winter comes, she doesn't worry or panic, because she's already made provision. She thinks ahead of time about what needs to be done. And these abilities to organize and anticipate seeing consequences and arranging for them ahead of time, as anyone who works in business knows, are managerial skills that are very important – they require a fine intellect.

A Proverbs 31 woman stays busy doing the *right* things at the *right time*. She plans her life in a way that she accomplishes a great deal, but she also makes sure that she has time to plan and rest. So here is a woman who excels in relationships and abilities – we see also, that:

3. SHE EXCELS IN CHARACTER

A person's abilities have to do with what they can accomplish – but you can discover the most about a person when you examine their character. Someone has said that character is who you are in the dark.

a. Outwardly Strong and Dignified

She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. – Proverbs 31:25a

When you look at this kind of woman, you notice something about her outward appearance. The first thing you notice about her is that she is clothed with strength and dignity.

That means that strength and dignity are so natural that she wears them like a well-fitting garment. When you look at her you see those qualities. They may begin on the inside, but they are evident on the outside.

I'm talking here about women who have experienced the death of a husband who took care of every detail of their lives and now that he's gone, they have the strength to carry on. I'm talking here also about women who are living as single moms but are able to raise their children by themselves. These women are resilient enough to carry on; that's the kind of strength this is talking about.

But she is also clothed with dignity. Our word *dignity* comes from a word that means "worthy." It is the picture of a woman who holds her head high, whatever the circumstances. A woman who doesn't buckle under pressure and is solid as a rock. That's why she can laugh at the days to come. She has the ability to maintain a positive and cheerful attitude in the midst of problems.

b. Inwardly Beautiful

"She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.—

Proverbs 31:26

Some of the greatest teachers in the history of the world have been mothers. Even Napoleon recognized this. When asked what's the greatest need of France, he replied immediately, "Mothers!"

God has given mothers a supernatural wisdom that few others have. In fact, if it were not for Thomas Edison's mom, America would not have produced one of the nation's greatest inventors. When he was a young boy his teacher sent him home with a note which said, "Your child is dumb. We can't do anything for him." Mrs. Edison wrote back, "You do not understand my boy. I will teach him myself". And she did, and the world has greatly benefited from that. Edison later remarked, "My mother was the making of me."

The ability to impart godly wisdom is an inner beauty. And did I tell you that Edison's mom was a devout Christian? No doubt it was her close relationship with the Lord that allowed her to teach Edison at home and shape him to be what he became to be.

So many women today are concentrating only on developing their outer beauty. But Proverbs 31 speaks of another kind of beauty – inner beauty. A beauty that lasts. It is reflected in the way she speaks and acts.

c. Spiritually Mature

“Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.” Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.–

Proverbs 31:29-31

The Hebrew word for “charm” literally means “bodily form.” You can be deceived by the appearance of a man or a woman. Beauty may be there for a few years – but it soon flees. But a woman who “fears the Lord” has an advantage over all others – she occupies a position of honor and blessing that age and appearance can't take away.

Where are the Proverbs 31 women? Look around you: they are sitting next to you; in the back and those who couldn't make it today and maybe watching us live on Facebook. Many of you live with Proverbs 31 women.

You see, this hypothetical standard pictures an excellent woman and any woman who desires to be a Proverbs 31 woman can be called one. Because when you express your desire to God to be this kind of woman, then He gives you the power to become more than you ever could on your own. Many of you men are sitting next to a Proverbs 31 woman; many of you men and women have mothers who are Proverbs 31 women. Be sure to give her the praise she deserves!