

Treasure Mothers
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Proverbs 31:10–31 (ESV)

Happy Mothers Day! Last week we listened in on a father/son talk from Solomon to his sons. Today, the mother of King Lemuel gives her son advice. Many scholars believe “Lemuel” was a nickname for Solomon and the mother giving advice was Bathsheba. Her picture of an EXCELLENT WIFE is perfect for this Mothers Day lesson.

Opening Question: **What one word you would you use to describe your mother?**

Sometimes you read a work of poetry that is so beautiful and so well crafted, you almost hate to analyze it beyond just reading the words. This section of Proverbs 31 is such a work. But scripture is not meant to be admired simply as beautiful poetry. It's to be consumed to provide wisdom and insight for life. First let's read and enjoy the beauty of these verses. Then, let's learn from them!

10 An excellent wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels.

11 The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.

12 She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.

13 She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.

14 She is like the ships of the merchant;
she brings her food from afar.

15 She rises while it is yet night
and provides food for her household
and portions for her maidens.

16 She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.

17 She dresses herself with strength
and makes her arms strong.

18 She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.

19 She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.

20 She opens her hand to the poor
and reaches out her hands to the needy.

21 She is not afraid of snow for her household,
for all her household are clothed in scarlet.

22 She makes bed coverings for herself;
her clothing is fine linen and purple.

23 Her husband is known in the gates
when he sits among the elders of the land.

24 She makes linen garments and sells them;

she delivers sashes to the merchant.

25 Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.

26 She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

27 She looks well to 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 women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all."

30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

31 Give her of the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the gates.

How can these verses impact our lives? They touch our hearts and minds in these ways:

- For those of us who had a wonderful mother: These words cause warm pictures to flash through our minds filling us with appreciation and moving us to "rise up and call her blessed."
- For those of us so blessed to have married a woman like this: It gives us an inventory of characteristics that cause us to be more mindful of what a treasure she is.
- For mothers and wives (especially young mothers; wives; and mothers and wives to be): Here is a model to emulate. Though this woman is exceptional (her husband says she "surpasses" all women), these qualities are not impossible or unattainable. They don't have to intimidate, they should inspire.
- For husbands to be: It's a standard in seeking a wife who is "far more precious than jewels."

Let's look back over these verses and unpack their meaning.

- Question: **In Solomon's time, what was the role of women versus men?**
- **Does this woman fit that stereotype? Why do you come to that conclusion?**
- **In verses 10, 11, and 12: How is her husband blessed by this wife?**
- Verse 11 says he will have "no lack of gain." My translation: Being married to her immediately made his "stock go up." When I married Susan my "stock" went up in many ways!
- **How can marrying the wrong woman cause the reverse to happen?**
- Not THIS wife, according to verse 12. She only does him "good" consistently and forever.
- **VV 13-15: What kind of household does this woman run? How would you describe her?**
- J. Vernon McGee in his commentary said growing up he never remembered getting up in the morning and finding his mother still in bed. Later in life, yes. But growing up she was always already up and usually had breakfast on the table. That's the woman in verse 15.
- The end of verse 15 is a clue to the next verses. She has "maidens." **What does that tell us?**
- Someone read verses 16, 18, and 24. **What do they say about this virtuous woman?**
- Verse 17 is interesting. Let's read it again. I wonder what that verse means?
- **Verse 20: What word would you use to describe her based on this verse?**
- **Verse 21: What do you think that verse means?**
- Verses 22 and 24, say she is a wonderful seamstress...

22 She makes bed coverings for herself;
her clothing is fine linen and purple.

24 She makes linen garments and sells them;
she delivers sashes to the merchant.

- Verse 25 describes the REAL fine clothing she wears:
25 Strength and dignity are her clothing,
- Not only does she have “strength and dignity” she has CONFIDENCE for the future. The last line says: “...and she laughs at the time to come.” This MUST be a woman of FAITH or she wouldn’t be so optimistic about the future. She has a ZEST for life! The BEST is yet to come!
- Verse 23 sort of feels like it was just dropped in here among the description of all the wonderful traits of this woman.

Proverbs 31:23 (ESV)

23 Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.

- What does that have to do with any of this? Nothing in scripture in an accident.

Larry Richards says in the Teachers Commentary:

When her husband takes his place among the men of the city, he is respected for his wife’s accomplishments! (v. 23) While he does not derive his identity from her, neither does she derive her identity from him. That is, she is not known as “banker Jones’ wife.” Her own accomplishments have merit and she has the respect of all for whom she is as a person (v. 31).

- This man is respected among his peers because he has such an amazing wife!
- “Boy it must be nice to have a wife like HIS wife!” Again, she makes HIM look good!
- Not only is she STRONG, DIGNIFIED, and HARD WORKING, she’s WISE and KINDHEARTED:

26 She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

- And that brings us to Mothers’ Day. The first celebration was in 1908 in Grafton, West Virginia thanks to the efforts of Anna Jarvis. 100 years ago this month in 1914 Woodrow Wilson and Congress made it official. But obviously, they celebrated Mothers’ Day in Solomon’s time.
- Proverbs 31 trumps anything Hallmark has ever printed. After they brought her beautiful middle-eastern flowers and had finished their meal, look at what happened:

28 Her children rise up and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:

29 “Many women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all.”

The Holman Bible Handbook summarizes what we’ve seen nicely:

The Proverbs 31 woman “...is trustworthy (31:11), industrious (31:13–19), intelligent (31:16, 18), and kind (31:20). She adds dignity to the family (31:23, 25) and has much foresight and prudence (31:21, 26). For all this she is much loved in her family and is the real center of the home (31:27–29).”

- What woman wouldn’t want to be like this woman?
- What man wouldn’t want her for a wife, and what children wouldn’t want her for a mother?
- But here is the REAL key to how this kind of woman can jump from the pages to reality:

30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

31 Give her of the fruit of her hands,

and let her works praise her in the gates.

- Don't be deceived by the AIRBRUSHED, cover-girl images Hollywood is selling.
- The true beauty of THIS virtuous woman is that she FEARS THE LORD.
- Give her the rewards she's earned. Her virtue will be honored among the leaders of the town.

So, What's The Takeaway?

- It's simple: Call your mother! Go see her! Tell her in detail all the reasons you love her.
- And if you're mother is not here to call, spend some time honoring her in your memory.
- And husbands, treat your wife like a QUEEN not just today but every day.
- Tell her on a regular basis: "Many women have done excellently, but YOU surpass them all!"