

A Mother Worthy of Praise

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[0 : 00] Well, please turn your Bible to Proverbs chapter 31.! This morning our attention will be directed to verses 10 through 31.

! And again, I say a very happy Mother's Day to all the mothers.! Do, I thank God for my own mother, and I'm especially grateful for her today.

Mothers are truly the heroes in families. And the truth is, as much as we recognize them for, there's so much more that they do.

Many times it's off the radar. Many times, not seen. And so we would do our best, and we would do well if we honored them and appreciated them every day, and not just on Mother's Day.

I'm sure some of you heard me say that I don't understand the competition that comes about this time of the year when there are some men who complain that women get too much attention, mothers get too much attention on Mother's Day, and fathers only get crab on Father's Day.

[1 : 32] I don't understand it. I really don't. And it's not to say that perhaps there are some fathers who probably should be celebrated more than mothers.

But that's not the norm, and this certainly is not one of them. And God's wise design is mothers who carry babies for nine months.

They watch their bodies change in all kinds of amazing ways, sometimes difficult ways. They go through the adventure of childbirth, the pain of which has been multiplied because of the fall, and some even die in childbirth.

And they have children knowing that possibility really exists. I remembered many years ago going into the maternity section of the Princess Margaret.

I was a younger, I was a young boy. I can't say younger boy because that would mean I'm still a boy. But I was a young boy, and I remembered this picture. It stayed with me, and there was this man who they made it look like he was pregnant.

[2 : 49] He had on these converse tennis. I could always remember these converse tennis. And they said, what if men got pregnant? And I reflected on that quite a bit, and what I realized was this.

If men used to get pregnant with their same mentality. Now, obviously, I believe God gives women a different psyche and everything else to go with motherhood.

But if men used to be able to get pregnant with their same mindset, there are certain things you don't have to worry about. You don't have to worry about overpopulation. You don't have to worry about any of that stuff.

I mean, there'd be very small families. In the Bahamas, we'd probably have some uninhabited islands. Nobody would be on those islands. Because women are just very, very special.

One of the things that I reflected upon is that when we read Scripture, and we read about God's compassion and His loving care, it's normally reflected in terms of mothers.

[3 : 58] When we read about His discipline, we would normally see that reflected in terms of fathers. And so when we read in Isaiah 49, 15, where the Lord is speaking through Isaiah, we read these words, Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?

And the answer generally is no. But the Lord goes on and says, Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.

And that's a powerful statement of a mother's love. And I think we have all lived long enough in this society in particular to see the truth of this kind of unending, unchanging, unbroken love that mothers have for their children.

I believe many of us have seen fathers walk away and abandon their children without a thought for them. And at the same time, we have seen so many examples of mothers who have done double

duty in child caring and child rearing.

Some of them working their fingers to the bone to try to take care of their children and only with what is left would seek to take care of themselves. And I can go on.

[5 : 35] But I'll stop and I'll just say to all of us men, let us celebrate our mothers. Let us celebrate the mother or mothers of our children.

Let's thank God for them. And let's see it as a part of his wonderful, wise design that he would create women with this ability to carry life within them and not just carry it because we know in the animal kingdom many of them just have it and drop off and they go on their way but they will nurture and they will care for these children.

Well, since today is Mother's Day I will primarily be addressing mothers but as this is God's word it is written to all of us and so let us this morning hear God's word.

Proverbs chapter 31 and we begin in verse 10. An excellent wife who can find.

She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her and he will have no lack of gain.

[7 : 06] She does him good and not harm all the days of his life. She seeks wool and flax and works with willing hands.

she's 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 and the fruit of her hands with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong.

She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. She puts her hands to the distaff and her hands hold the spindle.

she opens her hands to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. She's not afraid of snow for her household for all her household are clothed in scarlet.

[8 : 25] She makes bed coverings for herself. her clothing is fine linen and purple.

Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them.

She delivers sashes to the merchant. Strength and dignity are her clothing and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed.

Her husband also and he praises her. Many women have done excellently but you surpass them all. Charm is deceitful.

[9 : 31] Beauty is vain. But a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you this morning for your word. Lord, we ask in this moment that you would cause us all to hear it, mothers especially, but all of us.

We ask, Lord, that you would so superintend your word that you would work it in our hearts and lives for our good and for the glory of your name.

It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Even though we know that marriage and motherhood are not the experience of all women, we know that marriage and motherhood are the normal expectation of all women.

And this is certainly the biblical view and this is certainly the view that we see held out to us in this passage before us in Proverbs 31, 10-31.

[10 : 56] In this passage, we have God's wisdom recorded for us in this description of a mother who is worthy of praise.

And let me consider this passage and reevaluate what it says about this mother. I think we can faithfully conclude that the mother whom scripture celebrates is one who cares for her family, manages her home, and fears the Lord.

There's a whole lot in this passage that we have read and we won't get to all of it, but I believe that distilling this thought out of it for us this morning that the mother whom scripture celebrates is one who cares for her family, manages her home, and fears the Lord is a truth that we should hold on to and we should reflect upon as we celebrate Mother's Day with mothers today.

Now I think it's important at the outset to say that this is a poem. This is not the resume of some woman who lived at a certain time.

This is a poem that was written and it is an acrostic poem and an acrostic poem is one in which each verse of the poem begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

[12:42] And so it's really a crafted piece of literature that is designed to celebrate a mother. And the truth about it is when you read this poem, apart from divine endowment of these material resources and the kind of ability that we see displayed here, this woman doesn't exist.

It's not realistic for anyone to think, well, this is the norm and I should seek to go out and emulate it. That's not the point of this poem in our Bibles.

This, again, is a poetic celebration of the ideal mother and we should read it, mothers in particular be encouraged by it and in their own circumstances and with their own abilities, seek to learn from it and seek to grow from it.

And so in our remaining time, what I want to do is I want to just consider these three particular aspects of this celebrated mother, this mother who is worthy of praise, that we can consider on Mother's Day.

And the first characteristic that we see of this mother who is worthy of praise is she cares for a family. In verse 1 of Proverbs 31, we're told that this is a poem or an oracle that the mother of King Lemuel taught him.

[14:27] So this is actually a man who got insight from his mother. And what we see from this is that this is really King Lemuel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who is giving us these instructive insights into what is praiseworthy about a mother.

love for love for her. And when we look at it, we see, first of all, what motivates her is her love for a family. Notice again what we just read in verses 10 through 12.

love for an excellent wife. I think it's worth noting that this mother who is worthy of praise, her praise begins with her first priority in her family.

And her first priority in her family relates to her husband. And in this what we see is we see God's wise design that motherhood is to take place in the context of marriage.

marriage. Now I know in our fallen world, and increasingly so, this is not the pattern and the design that we see and this statement is not in any way to put down or make uncomfortable anyone who's had children outside of the context of marriage.

[16:24] But this is what we see that God's design, his wise design, is that motherhood takes place in the context of marriage. And so rightly so, where this part of Lemuel's poem begins is it begins with this woman and her husband.

And that really is a priority in her family. That's where the praise begins. And I think this is something we can easily overlook.

we can easily overlook this because again, motherhood is being divorced from marriage. There are women who want children but not marriage, not a husband, but they want children, but that's not the design that we see.

But also, I think it's important for us to recognize as well that motherhood can be so consuming with all the duties that we see laid out for this woman and even some more that we may think about that aren't here.

But notice where her priorities begin. Her priorities begin with her husband. And what is expressed is the kind of wife that she is to him and the kinds of things that she does for him.

[17:48] In verse 12, we're told that she does him good and not harm all the days of her life. All the days of her life. life. This is a lifelong commitment to this man, this first priority in her family to do him good all the days of her life.

good. The only question about that is, what does that good look like? But there's no question about what her aim and duty is.

It is to do her husband good all the days of his life. Now, does this mean that in the demands of marriage and child bearing, that no matter what and in every circumstance, this man, this husband is supposed to be this mother's priority.

The children are hungry, the children are screaming for their various needs, and she used to say, you wait, wait, wait, your daddy's my priority, I have to go take care of him, and daddy's there like a big baby and he needs something as well.

No, that's not the picture, that's not the picture that is being held out. The husband rightly positioned in his marriage should be there alongside his wife and appropriately helping her to respond to the needs of those children.

[19 : 28] So that's not the picture at all, that is being painted here. But I think it is worth saying because we live at a time especially when children are idolized.

It wasn't so in Bible times. In Bible times, children were marginalized and children were not valued. But today, children, we've come to another extreme where children can be so idolized and they can be so consuming in motherhood.

children. And what we see is in this ideal context with a husband and a wife and children that this woman who celebrated here, her priority begins with her husband.

Notice that there's really just one single reference to children in this passage. It's in verse 28. it says that these children will rise up and they will call her blessed.

But they're not calling her blessed for no reason. They're not calling her blessed in a vacuum. They're calling her blessed because of the loving care that she has displayed for them as she carries out her role as a mother.

[20 : 50] And what we do see is the many things that she does that they are the beneficiaries of. We see in verse 13, she seeks wool and flax and she works with willing hands.

In verse 13, she provides food for her household. In verse 19, she sews. In verse 21, her clothes, she clothes her family, the household, in scarlet.

or that's clothing of double thickness. And she teaches wisdom. And Scripture tells us that wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

And she also teaches kindness. And all these activities that this mother does, she does for the benefit of her children. She lovingly cares for her children.

children. Now mothers, when you think about this passage, I pray that you're not distracted and thinking, oh my goodness, I can't so. Because I don't think that's what you need to be striving for.

[22 : 00] I think you need to see behind that her diligence and her using the abilities that she had for the benefit of her own family. And I think the broader consideration, the broader reflection for mothers this morning, is the extent to which this is a driving motivation for them.

Or is this just some side duty or some marginal thing that you kind of put up with? Or is this front and center for you that you want to care for your family in the best way that you possibly can?

Using your abilities, using your time, giving best efforts to simply care for your family, not allowing other non-priorities to crowd out the central duty that God has given to you.

When I think about how the Lord, in his divine wisdom, one has chosen women to bear children, and the way he has chosen for them to bear children, God could have done it all kinds of different ways, but he did it in that particular way, that nurturing way, that way where a child is so much a part of a woman for just those years and then she, those months, and then the child comes into the world and then that care continues in a different way.

as I reflected on this, I thought about the fact that mothers carry children and even when they don't eat, the children eat.

[23 : 50] Even if they miss a meal, that baby is in there, finding food, pulling from wherever food comes in a mother's belly. But I think the point is that this first priority of caring for her family that we see displayed in this particular passage really needs to be seen as a God-given responsibility.

And I really think that's the way it needs to be considered because if you don't put it in that particular context, there is the likelihood that one, you don't look to God for the grace to do it, and two, you just see it as any other task which others can easily crowd out.

So that's the first characteristic that we see of this woman who is worthy of praise. She cares for her family. The second is she manages her home. And this is different.

I think we all know that there's a huge difference between caring for your family in a very personal and real way and then managing a home.

I think verse 27 sums it up. It says in verse 27, she looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

[25 : 16] In verse 15 we read, she rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens.

And verse 18 says, her lamp does not go out at night. You read this and you say, how can it? how can it go out with all the things that she has going on?

And the point of these particular passages, they all drive at the same observation.

She has a lot going on. There's a diligent mother who is managing her home. now I imagine that some mothers this morning, especially those who work full time jobs, may be conflicted.

I may even be saying, wow, how am I going to do all that stuff when I have a full time job? I may be even worse, I'm a single mother. And there's so many other considerations that you may say, this just would seem impossible for me to be attending to these kinds of duties and to the extent that they're displayed here in this passage.

[26 : 39] And what I would say is, I don't think again that the point is you must do all of these things. First of all, these things must be in the heart.

This recognition that this is a responsibility a primary responsibility, not exclusive responsibility of mothers, but a primary responsibility of mothers to look to the ways of their household, to manage it.

And again, I believe it's something God has designed women more so to do than men. And the point here is to not be idle.

The point here is to be dutiful. the point here is not to be a busy body doing all kinds of other things, but to have this orientation towards your household, towards your home, and to be managing it, and to be caring for it.

And you may enlist help to do this. You may recognize that this is not something that you're able to do based on your circumstances, so you may have somebody coming in who is helping you with a lot of these duties, but though you can delegate these duties, you cannot delegate the responsibility for them.

[28 : 04] You cannot delegate the role that you uniquely have to fulfill these things. And we should not lose sight that this woman here in Proverbs 31, she was not what you would call a stay-at-home mother.

She was not just doing that. We see that she had outside activities. She was earning money outside of the home. In verse 16, we see that she considers a field and buys it with the fruit of her hands and she plants a vineyard.

Verse 24, she makes linen garments and sells them. She delivers sashes to the merchants. This is about being resourceful. This is about not being idle.

And when you really consider that this is part of the calling of mothers, we are reminded they're true heroes to take on these particular responsibilities.

And this is especially true for those who are single mothers, who don't have the support of a father, a husband alongside them.

[29 : 24] God in his wisdom designed it that there would be two parents in this particular context who would be raising a family and managing in these particular ways.

hearts off to all the single mothers this morning who continue to do these things and whose hearts are still towards their families and also towards their homes.

And mothers, I would say as you reflect on this this morning, just think about where you might be needing to grow or where maybe there's an evidence of grace that you are doing well in this area of not allowing all of the demands and other duties that are upon you to take away from you being committed to diligently managing your household.

And again, this begins in the heart. Is your heart oriented towards that? For some mothers today, to be described as homebound, to be described as centered on their homes and their families is demeaning.

They consider it out of step and out of style and out of fashion. But friends, there is no design of God. That is out of step or out of fashion.

[31 : 05] Anything that God has designed that we consider to be out of step or out of fashion helps us to see how far we have drifted. And when we drift from what God calls us to, we suffer the consequences of it.

And so I pray that you are hopefully encouraged in some ways where you're able to see evidences of your management of your household and where you need to grow and that you would ask the Lord to grant grace to be able to do that.

And just to say something to us husbands as well, this doesn't mean that we just fold our arms and twiddle our thumbs and allow all of this to fall upon our wives.

They may have the primary duty and interest in managing the household and making sure that things are going well, but we have to be alongside them and making that job easier than harder.

We should not be just like the children. My mother used to use this one description for one of the children.

[32 : 25] She said, you're just like a snake. Wherever you leave your clothes, you shed your clothes wherever you leave them. And we shouldn't be like that as husbands.

We should be helping and enabling them to manage the home well. So this mother who's worthy of praise, we see first of all that she is caring for her family, she manages her household, and then the third and final observation I want us to see from this passage is she fears the Lord.

Look at verse 30. Verse 30 says, charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

Why is charm deceitful? deceitful? Why is charm deceitful? Well, one of the reasons that charm is deceitful, and I think we've all experienced it, is really there should not be anything that needs to be charming.

Charm is almost something in front of a reality that makes us drawn towards it that we otherwise wouldn't be drawn towards it.

[33 : 56] And that's why it says charm is deceitful, because we often find that what we are charmed towards is very different from what we thought it was once we've been charmed.

Charm is deceitful, And yet how much time can we find ourselves investing in being charming? Also, we're told beauty is vain.

And you know why beauty is vain? The word for vain is mist. Beauty is like that. Beauty is fleeting. Beauty cannot be contained.

You can't put your beauty in a sealed container and retain it and keep it. In God's wise design, beauty fades. And in the context of talking about a woman, because that's what he's talking about here, talking about this mother who's worthy to be praised, really just saying to her, charm isn't worth it.

Investing your time and trying to be charming is just not worth it. And being captivated and so caught up in your beauty and trying to retain it, it's not worth it.

[35 : 24] It's vain. It's like mist. It's going to go away. It's God's wise design. over time for the most figurative woman, the curves some will go straight.

With his firm, some be flabby. that was not a good moment to say anything.

No, charm is deceitful, beauty is vain. We can't contain it. It's going to go away from us. It's all God's wise design. But here's what's lasting.

What's lasting is the woman who fears the Lord. She is to be praised. She is to be praised continually. Not praised in the moment.

She is to be praised continually. The woman who fears the Lord. This is what is to be cultivated. This is where the accent is.

[36 : 41] I've heard it said that whenever you're writing, if you're writing a sentence with several thoughts in it, they say that the best way to write is to put the most important thought right at the end.

You don't put the most important thought right at the beginning because if you put the most important thought right at the beginning, then what happens is other thoughts crowd out what was said. I think it's instructive for us that not only in this celebration of this woman, and not only in verse 30 where it talks about charm, and beauty that the fear of the Lord is the very last thing that is lifted up about this mother who is worthy to be praised.

She's a woman who fears the Lord. So she's a wise woman. You know sometimes children wonder, how does my mother know that?

My mother don't know anything. My father doesn't know anything. And the thing is this, the fear of the Lord teaches a lot of things. The fear of the Lord makes wise those who you don't think ought to be wise or ought to really know.

This woman, this mother, is ultimately celebrated cared for her. She fears the Lord. Caring for a family, important?

[38 : 13] Yes. Managing a household, important? Yes. But friends, most important is that this woman, she fears the Lord.

And if there's anything to be remembered by as a mother, more than anything else, it is this particular characteristic, it is this particular attribute that she fears the Lord.

I have a lot of fond memories about my mother. One of the fond memories of my mother that still happens to this day is my mother is a great storyteller.

She tells stories about growing up in Acklands and the way things were. And I remember some of the stories my mother used to tell us. I said, Mom, that's not true.

That can be true. People never used to do those kinds of things. Like one of the things that she told us was that, I'm going to get off on a tangent, help me to come back to this if I get lost, all right?

[39 : 18] This is not my notes. This is not my notes. I noticed I have a bit more time, so I thought I would just say this. But my mother would tell us, she told us that when she was younger, if a young person walked into a room and there were five persons in the room, they had to greet each person individually.

Good morning, Mr. Jones. Good morning. I said, Mom, nobody did that. People never did that. She said, yes, we did that. We did that. And I just thought, the world couldn't have been like that.

But you know what really changed my mind and helped me to really say, yeah, it probably was just like that. For me, who grew up, that when you walked into a room, you say good morning, to now be alive, where you see people walk into a room and they don't say anything.

And so when you say now, you know, when I was growing up, when we walked into a room, we used to say good morning, and they're like, nobody say good morning, because nobody says good morning. And you learn how times have changed.

But here's what I remember most about my mother. One of the lingering memories of my mother is hearing her pray.

[40 : 48] It's a lingering memory to this day to walk by my mother's bedroom and to hear her pray.

And I'm reminded that more than anything else, the mother who is worthy of praise is the mother who fears the Lord.

God, when all the things you've done for your children have faded away, this, this lingering memory, by God's grace, will still grip their hearts.

When they could remember times that you've lifted them up in prayer personally, when they could remember times where you've instructed them in God's word and you've been an example before them, that, friends, is ultimately the reason that a mother is worthy to be praised.

psalm 19, verse 9 says, the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.

[42 : 21] That's what endures. That's what lasts. None of the things of this world. And this informs how we are to live.

Mothers, yes, but all of us. we are to live, to embrace the fear of the Lord. If I were to be asked, what is one mark among the people of God that is visibly absent and so desperately needs to return?

I would say, far too widely, we have lost the fear of the Lord. We have lost the fear of the Lord.

And here's the reason we've lost the fear of the Lord. We've lost the fear of the Lord because we have lost our knowledge of him. To know God is to fear God. the more we know the Lord, the more we fear the Lord.

And so this morning, again mothers, I hold our God's word to you. I pray that you are encouraged from this passage. I pray that you are challenged from this passage in ways where you may need to grow in caring for your family and managing your home and fearing the Lord.

[44 : 01] But on this last point, I commend it to all of us. May all of us grow in the fear of the Lord. May there be a holy fear of the Lord that constrains us to worship him and to serve him as we should.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word today. Would you encourage the hearts of mothers, whatever their circumstance today.

Would you challenge them where they need to be challenged? And Lord, I pray for all of us this morning that we would grow in our fear of you.

Forgive us, Lord, when we have invested more time in being charming and in being beautiful than we have in the fear of the Lord.

Lord, Lord, we ask that you would work in our hearts and help us to right those priorities.

[45 : 33] We ask you because only you can do that. So help us, Lord, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Let's sign for our closing song.