

A Woman Who Feels the Lord

(by Pastor Trent Boedicker)

Text: Proverbs 31:10-31

5/8/16

*Her children rise up and bless her;
Her husband also, and he praises her, saying:
“Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all.”
Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain,
But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.*

You know the saying: “Behind every good man... is a great woman.” There is a lot of wisdom in that statement. I imagine that if you asked the married men, gathered here this morning, most if not all of us would admit that we wouldn’t be where we are without the support and encouragement of our wives. I thought I would test this out, and pulled a couple of random books from my bookshelf. Flipping through the opening pages, I wanted to see if the authors acknowledged anyone special who had been particularly helpful to them along the way (maybe a friend, or a colleague or professor...). Guess who these books were dedicated to? Both of the men expressed gratitude to their wives.

One writes, “*On this, our thirtieth wedding anniversary, I dedicate this book to my wife... You are God’s gift of grace in my life. Every room seems empty if you aren’t in it.*” (Max Lucado “Grace”)

The other says, “*To my wife... for the love, family, home, and friendship the Lord has graced us to share.*” (Bryan Chapel “Christ Centered Preaching”).

These are heartfelt words, acknowledging to the whole world – “I wouldn’t be where I am today without the woman who stands beside me.” I’m sure that if I went through all of the books in my library, I would find many more statements like these.

The person you choose to marry will have a profound impact on the rest of your life. It is one of the most important decisions a young man or young woman will ever make. It is more important than choosing a career. It is more important than deciding where you are going to live. It is more important than buying a house. Perhaps the only decision, of greater consequence, is choosing whether or not to accept Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Guys, if you choose well, and marry a godly wife, she will help you become the man God has called you to be. Ladies, if you choose well, and marry a godly husband, he will help you become the woman that God has called you to be. Together, you will build a loving home. Your children will find positive examples to follow. Even though you might face a myriad of challenges in your life, you will be in a good position, with the help of the Lord, to overcome them.

That’s the theme of our passage, this morning, in Proverbs 31: choosing a godly spouse

We did a study of the book of Proverbs, earlier in the year, and learned that it is a book of wisdom. Much of the book is written from the perspective of a father (King Solomon), passing on sage advice to his son (and all the sons and daughters of Israel). He is showing them how to live a successful life (success as defined by God, not the world). Here, the final chapter is written from the perspective of a wise mother who is trying to impress upon her son the importance of choosing a wife who fears the Lord.

Verse 1 says, “The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him...” We don’t know anything about King Lemuel, who he was or when he lived. There is no other passage in the Bible where he is mentioned. It could be a pseudonym for Solomon. Or it could be someone else (Scripture tells us that Solomon not only wrote many proverbs, but that he collected wise sayings from others). Either way, we see the concern of a mother who wanted her son to carefully consider the type of woman he was going to marry. We can almost hear her saying, “Lemuel, don’t go out on a date with any pretty girl who comes along. Pay attention to her character, look at her heart. And if you find someone special, don’t you dare take her for granted!” Lemuel’s mother wanted her son to meet someone who would bring out the best in him, who would fill their home with joy and laughter, who would be a faithful companion with whom he could share an enduring love. For all of this to take place, it was vitally important for him to choose a woman who fears the Lord.

Of course, the same principles would also apply for young women. If Lemuel had sisters, I’m sure their mother would have told them, “be very careful about the type of man you choose to marry. Look for someone who shares your faith, a man who fears the Lord.”

These words of wisdom continue to ring true today, just as they did when they were originally written. There are mothers today who pray for the future spouse of their children. “Lord, guide them to the right person, someone who will help them to follow you.”

As we look at these verses, we are shown the sort of qualities that a wise young man might look for in a potential wife. For those who are married, and have been blessed with such a mate, the verses remind us not to take her for granted.

1. First of all, the passage shows us that a virtuous wife is busy. (v.15, 18, 27)

There is never a dull moment. She is always on the move. Charity and I used to think that we were busy, and then we had kids. Now we are starting to understand, for the first time, what the word really means. The wife in these verses is busy tending to the needs of her family. She is industrious and hardworking. We see that in verses 13...

(v.13) *“She looks for wool and flax and works with her hands in delight” –*

Flax is a plant that’s used to make linen, for clothing. One of the concerns of a godly woman is making sure her husband and children have adequate clothes to wear. She doesn’t want them wearing the same outfit every day. If it were up to us guys, we would probably tell our kiddos “you’re fine, just turn that shirt inside out and you’ll be good for a few more days.” That’s not

going to fly with mom. Whether she has to make them herself, or she knows where to go to find bargains, one way or another, her family will always leave the house looking presentable.

(v.14) “*She is like merchant ships; she brings her food from afar.*”

Maybe you can picture your wife pushing the shopping cart down the aisle of the store, with a grocery list in hand. She knows what the family needs, and where to get it (if Meijer is having a 10 for \$10 sale this week, or if there is a special at community market.) Like cargo ships constantly coming and going, bringing supplies, she does her best to make sure the cupboards are stocked, and there is food in fridge.

(v.15) “*She rises also while it is still night and gives food to her household...*”

Mom’s often the first one to wake up in the morning, and the last one to go to bed at night. It’s not that she requires less sleep than everyone else, but there important concerns that require her attention. The little ones need breakfast before rushing off to school. Someone has to read them a story and tuck them in, before they go to sleep at night. Clothes need to be laid out for the next day. As they say, a mother’s work is never done.

I’ve had different jobs, over the years, where I punched a time clock. I put my time card into a little machine and it stamped the time I walked through the doors. On the way out, I put the card back into the machine, and stamped the time I left. It was often an eight hour day, sometimes a 10 or 12 hour day. --- mom’s don’t punch a time clock. They are always on duty, always on call... even when they are sound asleep, who jumps out of bed at 3:00 in the morning, when a little one had a bad dream, and is crying upstairs? It’s usually mom. Dads might sleep right through it, but not mom.

We could continue reading, about all of the different ways that this wife and mother ministers to the needs of her family. She is multitalented, and wears all sorts of different hats:

- Moms have to be a **Taxi driver** – shuttling kids back and forth to school, youth group, or soccer practice
- She is a **Nutritionist** – preparing healthy meals for little ones
- She is a **Sanitation engineer** – cleaning up after everyone
- She is a **Seamstress** – patching up holes in an old pair of jeans
- She is a **Financial consultant** – trying to make the budget stretch as far as possible
- She is a **Fashion consultant** – informing her husband that tie he has picked out definitely does not in any way match the shirt he is currently wearing
- She is a **Cattle Rancher** – herding everyone out the door, in the morning, making sure they get to the places they are supposed to be
- And there are a hundred other roles that she fills

Every day brings a new challenge: whether she is helping her son build a volcano for the science fair, or going door to door with her daughter selling girl scout cookies. Stepping outside of her comfort zone comes with the territory. No matter the challenge, she always finds a way.

Raising a family takes a lot of work. It's not the kind of work that you resent doing; she finds joy in it because she does it out of love for her husband and children. But it can be still exhausting, and maybe a bit overwhelming at times. It is very difficult for her to make time for herself, because there are so many people relying on her, and demanding her attention. And so a godly husband would do well to lend a hand, and let her know she is not in it alone.

- Guys: we can pitch in around the house. Don't expect her to do it all. If she is the one who normally does the dishes, surprise her one day by having the dishes done and put away. If she is the one who normally cooks dinner, tell her one evening that you've got it covered. Marriage is a partnership. It's about working together, as a team.
- Give her time for herself. Encourage her to go out with friends, and let her know that you will hold down the fort for the evening. Or arrange for a babysitter, every now and then, to take her out on a date.
- Let her know how much you appreciate all that she does. Moms don't do what they do for applause, but it helps knowing that your efforts are not taken for granted.

2. The passage also shows us that a virtuous wife is caring. (v.20, 21, 26)

She has a heart of compassion, and is concerned for the wellbeing of others, not just in her own family, but also for the different people that she meets along the way. We see that in verse 20. *"She extends her hand to the poor, and she stretches out her hands to the needy."*

When God causes someone to cross our path, who is going through some hardship, we can respond in one of two ways. We can tell ourselves, "that's too bad, but there's nothing I can do, after all, I have my own family to worry about." Or, we can seek to help, in whatever way we are able. The godly woman chooses to extend her hand, and shows compassion.

Maybe her son has a friend, who is over at their house playing, one afternoon. As he is getting ready to leave, she asks, "You can't go outside without a coat, it is cold and you'll get sick." But she finds out the boy doesn't have a coat. His parents don't have a lot of money, and the long sleeve shirt, he is wearing, is the warmest thing he owns. Even though he is not her son, she's a mom, and she cares for that boy. She thinks about how awful it would feel if she were not able to provide warm clothes for her children. She tells the boy to wait a minute, and then disappears into the closet. She returns with one of her son's coats. "Here, it looks like this will fit you." After he leaves, she goes through his son's dresser to see what else they might have, that he could use.

Or maybe her daughter comes home from school, and tells her about a friend, who often doesn't have lunch money. So the mom packs a little extra, in her daughter's lunch, so she will be able to share.

Or it could be that the woman signs up, with a group from church, to serve meals at the soup kitchen. Instead of letting her children stay home, and watch TV, she brings them along. "Mom, we don't want to go." She tells them it will be good for them. Maybe they complain the entire

way there, and it would have been a lot easier to go by herself, but she is teaching them the value of serving others.

Sometimes, extending her hand to the poor, might mean making a sacrifice. Instead of going out to eat, they have to raid the fridge for leftovers, because they mom choose to help the neighbor with groceries. But that's okay. The lesson her children learn from that experience is will stick with them for the rest of their lives.

If she is willing to show compassion and care to strangers, a godly women will especially want to demonstrate a caring heart towards her family. Verse 26 says, "*She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.*" She always knows what to say, when her children need encouragement or are hoping for a word of advice.

Her son strikes out at a critical moment, in the baseball game, and his team ends up losing the big game. He is discouraged. "I'm quitting. Everyone is mad at me, and said it's my fault. I'm never going to play again." She sits there, beside him, and listens to his disappointment. She puts her arm on his shoulder, and tells him not to give up. "I know that you are discouraged, but even the great baseball players have days like that. If they had quit, when they were little league, where would they be now? Besides, you enjoy baseball. In the last game you had the winning catch. You don't want to give that up, because of one tough game." She was there to listen, when he needed her. He will remember those talks with mom, and the words of wisdom she shared, for years to come.

One of the ways that her husband can show appreciation is by listening, and letting her know that he cares. She is always thinking about the needs of others, but you need to look after her needs. Just showing that you are there, is important.

3. Proverbs 31 also shows us that a virtuous wife is positive when she thinks about the future. (v.25)

In verse 25 we read, "*Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future.*" One commentator puts it this way, "she laughs at whatever troubles the future may bring because... being a woman of character and strength, she is prepared for whatever may come." (Garrett, D. A.. New American Commentary: *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs* Vol. 14, p. 251. 1993.)

A godly woman does her best to look after her husband and children, but she knows that even in the moments when she can't be there for them, the Lord goes with them. And that helps give peace of mind. Yes, she is deeply concerned about the wellbeing of her family, and the challenges her children face weigh on her heart. But she is learning to cast those cares upon the Lord, entrusting them to His loving care.

She has a godly confidence knowing that God is watching over her family. There is never a moment when He leaves them alone. There is never day when He is off, tending to other business, in the universe. He is right beside them, through every struggle they face. No matter how big their problems might be, they are secure in His loving arms.

Charity and I are just now entering this phase of life as parents. Right now, our little ones are either with us, or they are with someone we trust, 24 hours a day. But next fall, we will be sending our oldest to kindergarten. I don't know what to think about that. For the first time in her life, we are going to have let go, a little, and trust that it will be okay. There will be all kinds of things we could worry about. What if she falls down at recess and gets hurt? What if another kid picks on her? What if she has trouble in one of her classes? And this is only kindergarten. I imagine it is only going to get more difficult with each grade. A mom or dad could go crazy, worrying about all of the things that could happen. But God reminds us that they are His children too, and He will be with them with them.

A godly woman can be confident knowing she has started her little ones out on the right path, and done everything she could do to teach them to love Christ. Her hopes and dreams are that her sons would grow to become godly young men, and her daughters would grow to become godly young women, that the Lord would do wonderful things in their lives.

Every couple faces rough patches and trials, but the woman who has learned to trust God with the future becomes a source of inspiration for her husband and family. When her husband is discouraged, she can remind him that they still have each other to lean on, for strength and support, and God is still the foundation of their home.

If he is laid off at work, and comes home disappointed, asking "How are we ever going to make it through this?" She cries with him, and whispers, "we'll get through this together, and with a lot of help from the Lord."

The confidence, of a godly woman, brings a sense of calm assurance to her family. She teaches them how to lean on the Lord, and look to the future with hope.

During one of the thunderstorms we've had, these past couple of weeks, one of our girls came downstairs, crying. She doesn't like thunder, and it is especially loud upstairs. We sat with her on the couch, looking out the window, and showed her how thunderstorms can be beautiful to watch, that we don't have to be afraid. Just sitting beside Charity and brought a sense of peace and calm to her face. We were okay, and so she realized that she would be okay.

We all need that person to lean on, from time to time, that helps us keep our perspective. No one is strong all the time, husband and wife are able to be there for each other, to remind one another that it will be okay.

There are going to be times, men, when she needs you to be that rock she can lean on, to remind her that it will be okay. One of the best things a couple can do is pray together. When you are laying in bed at night, and some problem is keeping you awake, hold hands and pray out loud. Ask the Lord for the peace that surpassing all comprehension.

Conclusion –

There is certainly a lot more we could learn from this passage, but we don't have time to mine every verse this morning. I love the closing verses. Verse 28 reads,

*Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying:
“Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all.”
Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.*

If the Lord has brought a woman like this into your life, men, you need to cherish her.

- Let her know how much she means to you, that her worth is far above jewels.
- Tell her how beautiful she is in your eyes. She has a beauty that far excels what the world thinks of when they judge whether or not someone is attractive. The world focuses exclusively on outward appearance, but that kind of beauty fades over time. On the other hand, if you fall in love with her heart, you will only grow to appreciate her beauty more and more as the years go by.
- Praise her often. Thank her for all that she does. Express your gratitude for walking beside you, and enriching your life with her love. Get creative: leave her notes, or post a love song on her Facebook page, buy her flowers every once and while. At the very least, tell her. Don't say “I don't need to do that, she knows.” I'm sure she does, but it is still good to hear it.

Every husband can do a better at expressing appreciation for his wife. When a couple is dating, this sort of thing comes naturally. You are trying to win her heart. But after you are married, it can easy to forget that she still needs to feel cherished.

For the young men, and young women, here this morning who are not yet married, but hope to be one day, I urge to take to heart the wisdom of these verses. This is the kind of spouse you should seek, a wife or a husband who fears the Lord.

If you are a parent or a grandparent, pray that this would be the kind of your children would find.

Maybe you are here this morning, and you realize that you haven't been type of husband, or this kind of wife. Maybe you have been thinking only about yourself, and putting your own selfish interests ahead of your spouse. Today is a new day. It's not too late to change. Ask the Lord to breath new life into your marriage.