

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

The Ideal Woman
By
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Mother's Day
Proverbs 31:10-31

The story is told of a man who traveled frequently by riverboats on the Mississippi. While on these vessels he tried to avoid going by the engine room because of the smell of hot oil on the boiler and the odor of stagnant bilge water that had not been pumped out. It almost made him sick to smell this combination of odors as he passed the engine room.

One week, as he was taking his ride on a riverboat, he noted a great difference. Lounging in the entrance to the engine room was a short, rather squat man with a gleaming face and bright eyes. He was reading a Bible. But from the engine room there were none of the usual foul odors. The engine itself had been polished until there wasn't a speck of oil left on it. The bilge water had been pumped out and even the boards on the inside had been scrubbed clean. It was so different from anything that he had seen before that he couldn't help but speak about it to the engine man sitting there in the doorway.

All that the man said, as his face lit up was this: **"I Have A Glory."**

Malcolm K. Burton, who retells the story comments: "A strange use it would seem for that noble word. Yet in a clean engine room and a gleaming engine that man had found a glory."

Lemuel is an unknown, ancient king. Some commentators believe this was Solomon, for the name signifies one that is for God, or devoted to God. This agrees well enough with that honorable name. He had been given the name Jedediah -- meaning, beloved of the Lord. Lemuel may have been the fond and endearing name bestowed on him by his mother.

Solomon had such respect and love for his mother that he may not have been ashamed to call himself by it. Be that as it may the words recorded in Proverbs 31 are relevant for all ages.

King Lemuel had had a godly mother who had taught him precious truths. Who can estimate the power and weight of a mother's teaching? She had taught him not to chase girls as a pastime, not to drink wine immoderately. She taught him to assist the afflicted, to take up for the unfortunate, to judge righteously, and to defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.

The Holy Spirit would teach us through this ancient king the marks of excellence for a wife and a mother. Note first of all about this ideal woman...

I. She Is Noble In Character

This in itself is a rarity, as the scripture points out. ⁰ **An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.**

In contemporary America we have casual and improper sexual alliances. In a study made by the Ohio State University Extension Service it was found that trial marriages, where both parties agree to live together without the formality of a marriage contract, exist in great numbers on many college campuses and metropolitan areas throughout the country. And society seems to accept it.

I believe it is unfair to blame the woman alone for improper sexual alliances, yet instinctively we depend more on women than men to hold the line for virtue. When women forsake virtue and opt for marriage less sex it is bad news.

The attraction of marriage for the man is to have and to hold a virtuous woman. He does not marry his mistress. Instinctively he wants a woman with virtue, with integrity, with that priceless something called noble character. He does not want for a wife a woman of easy morals, because he knows he cannot trust her completely.

Whence comes this noble character? Is this just an inherited quality? Must he look for a classy woman with superior education, or out of a good family tree, or a particular finishing school? No. None of these will guarantee noble character. The king tells us in verse 30 ³⁰
**Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain,
But a woman who fears the LORD, she
shall be praised.**

Good character springs out of a solid Biblical faith in Jesus Christ. A life committed to the Lord will be able to produce that noble character which is vital substance for all of the attributes that make a woman precious and desirable.

Too many men look for beauty instead of for virtue. Beauty is not indicative of goodness or wisdom, and it has deceived many a man who has made his choice of a wife by it. Beauty recommends none to God. There may be an impure, deformed soul lodged in a comely and beautiful body. Indeed, beauty has been a temptation and a snare for many.

Beautiful women are exposed to many temptations, as are attractive men, which has ruined their virtue and wrecked their souls. Like a flower that blooms it

soon withers and fades away, therefore it is vain and deceitful. But the fear of the Lord in the heart becomes the beauty of the soul.

But the ideal woman of Proverbs 31 is a wife that her husband can absolutely and completely trust. She is his helpmeet, and her value cannot be measured in monetary terms. She is priceless.

II. She Is Industrious

Her husband's trust is not only because of her chastity, her faith in Christ inclines her to desire please her husband and do all that she can to be a helpmeet to him. She conducts herself so that he trusts in her fidelity and discretion in all dealings. She can be depended upon not to betray his interests or counsels. He can leave her in charge of his household and know that she will manage well and wisely. Verses 11-12 say, ¹¹ **The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain.** ¹² **She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.**

We hear a lot about career women today. Well, this ideal woman has a career, and that career is her husband, her home and family. But it is not an idle existence. It is a very busy life she lives, and it is full of activity. She is a businesswoman, but it is not the business of some employer or shopkeeper or even her own outside business. The business that keeps her occupied continually is her husband and household. She uses her time and money wisely. She even produces income by making things at home and selling them, then she invests in profitable ventures. In the case cited by the king, ²⁴ ¹⁶ **She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard. She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies belts to the tradesmen.**

This lady is engaged in a home enterprise, what we call today a home based business. Then she plows her earnings back into projects and property that will yield a return on her investment. **She considers a field and buys it;** then on that field she plants a vineyard, so she is continually producing more and more. What a woman! ¹⁸ **She senses that her gain is good; Her lamp does not go out at night.** ¹⁹ **She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hands grasp the spindle**

20 She extends her hand to the poor,

And she stretches out her hands to the needy. ²¹ She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet.

²² **She makes coverings for herself;
Her clothing is fine linen and purple.**

This woman has a vocation. She is not a lazy person who idles away her days. She is busy, busy, busy.

But her goodness and love for husband and family are what motivate her busyness. No wonder Lemuel says her price is above rubies. She is worth her weight in gold. The husband has the responsibility for being the breadwinner, but he has a wife at home who is helping him, doing him good. What a blessing! What a joy! She is his best friend, his never failing partner in making their family a success in every way conceivable.

She is not down at a shopping Mall spending her time and money on herself, idling away her time at bridge games and fashion shows. She is too busy for those frivolous things. She is enjoying herself having a career of being a wife and helpmeet, a mother and a friend, a queen in her castle doing all she can to make her husband more kingly and her children princely. Why it says in verse 23, ²³ **Her husband is known**

in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land. He is esteemed and admired, and his wife is much of the reason. Her goodness overflows to others. She is not selfish with what the Lord has given to her. It is not for her household alone that she has a concern, ²⁰ **She extends her hand to the poor, And she stretches out her hands to the needy.**

III. She Has A Glory

This woman radiates love and joy and peace. She is happy with herself and with her life. We read in

verses 25 and 26 ²⁵ **Strength and dignity are her clothing, And she smiles at the future. ²⁶ She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.**

This woman is fulfilled. She has something to show for her life. She is not ashamed of her life. She may not have fame and fortune. She may never have been a beautiful woman or had special advantages, but she is the ideal woman because she has entered into womanhood with a proper fear of God and a goodness and love that is the concomitant of putting God first in her life. She has done something

beautiful and glorious with her life. She is a success, not a failure. SHE HAS A GLORY.

28 Her children rise up and bless
 29 her; Her husband *also*, and he
 30 praises her, *saying*: ²⁹ "Many
 31 daughters have done nobly,
 But you excel them all."

She is genuinely loving and loved. She has those who think she was the very best of all the best. She has a glory! Yes, a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. ³¹ **Give her the product of her hands, And let her works praise her in the gates..**

What a glory to be a woman with such a possibility, With such a potential for having a glory of her own. There is no love quite like that of a mother or a wife. Of such things Women's Lib. knows nothing.

Hear the praise of a few departed sons:
 ABRAHAM LINCOLM said: "All that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother."

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS said: "All that I am my mother made me."

DWIGHT L. MOODY declared: "All that I have ever accomplished in life, I owe to my mother."

BENJAMIN WEST declared: "A kiss from my mother made me a painter."

HENRY WARD BEECHER once said: "The memory of my sainted mother is the brightest recollection of my early years."

I can say to you today that the best friends I have ever had or hope to have are my Lord Jesus, my mother and my wife. I could not and would not be the man I am today but for their love and help. Wives and mothers may have a glory! No one else but our Lord Christ has kindled such love as God-fearing mothers and wives.

Rudyard Kipling wrote:

If I were hanged on the highest hill,
 Mother o' mine, o mother o' mine,
 I know whose love would follow me still,
 Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine.

If I were drowned in the deepest sea,
 mother o' mine, O mother o' mine,
 I know whose tears would come down to me,
 Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine.

If I were damned of body and soul,
 Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine,
 I know whose prayer would make me whole,
 Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine.

Young ladies, Women in the Church, mothers, wives, wives and mothers to be, pattern yourselves after the Ideal Woman of Proverbs 31. Be virtuous, honest, upright and kind. Be industrious for your husband and family, including your church family. Be always a woman of faith, drawing your strength from God. It will be your glory by and by.

And to the rest of us today, I say,

If you have a smile for mother, give it now.
 If you have a kindly word, speak it now.
 She' ll not need it when the angels
 greet her at the golden gate;
 Give the smiles now while she is living,
 if you wait 'twill be too late.

If you have a flower for Mother,
 Pluck it now.
 Place it gently on her bosom,
 Print a kiss upon her brow.

What cares she when life is over,
 For the flowers that bloom below.
 She will have her share up yonder,
 Scattered at her feet galore.

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