

RISE UP AND CALL HER BLESSED**Proverbs 31:10-31****(Read Proverbs 31:10-31)**

Intro: It is with a little trepidation that I venture into a sermon using this passage. Many women hear these 21 verses and feel overwhelmed with a sense of inadequacy in comparison with such an amazing person. Let me just say right now, to every woman in this room, you are a version, in some way, of this amazing person.

I've preached on this passage before, in fact I preached from it here at ABC, perhaps 15 years ago, using a sermon that I had first preached in the early 90s at a previous church. I had similar trepidation here at ABC, because after that first time in 1991, I was confronted by two ladies who felt that I was holding them to a higher, and therefore, unfair, standard than they were capable of. Apparently, as I spoke, instead of being encouraged, which was my intention, they felt worse and worse. While I felt that I was honoring women with my words, I was instead inflicting them with guilt for never reaching the pinnacle of perfect womanhood described in Proverbs 31. I was deflated because I had deflated them. I was not trying to place undue pressure on them. The fact was, or so I hoped, my sermon was saying, it this is what the women we love and the women who serve us and minister to us are doing, then let's help them. Let's not take them for granted. I missed the mark, and they, obviously, missed my point.

So let me say this: ladies, I'm not holding you up to any kind of expectation or standard. Instead I am pointing out why we should rise up and call you blessed. Your gifting and your uniqueness needs to be celebrated and honored and certainly never taken for granted and that is my intention on this day where we celebrate mothers and mother figures. That covers every woman in this room.

The writer of this particular proverb is probably not Solomon, nor is it Lemuel who is referred to in the first 10 verses of the chapter. It is however a soaring tribute to a wife who personifies excellence and it just so happens that it comes in the closing verses of a book of the Bible that, sadly, often shows women in a negative light. They are described as temptresses or nagging nuisances who are compared to dripping faucets and the like. One proverb even claims, *It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.* Proverbs 21:9. While quarrelsome wives and tempting adulteresses are not unknown, it is my opinion that Solomon, who was the author of most of these proverbs, was overwhelmed by women and he was the one completely responsible for his situation. It will be in another sermon that I will preach before this series is over, but I will point out that this man who was so wise was so completely unwise in his rejection of God's direction in his life – especially in the area of marriage and relationships. He had over a thousand wives, concubines, and other women who vied for his attention and indeed stole it away from his relationship with God. Such a cacophony would drive any person to distraction. Solomon's vision was clouded. That is why I am grateful that Proverbs concludes with a soaring picture of the gift that womanhood brings to humanity. With that in mind let's look at the reasons to rise up and call her blessed. Soak this up ladies and do not take it as a reason for guilt, instead receive honor.

Don't take her for granted

- An excellent or capable wife is hard to find according to the writer more precious than jewels. This makes a simple point: **DON'T TAKE HER FOR GRANTED!** Husbands don't forget it! Kids, don't forget it! You have been blessed with a jewel.

She is trustworthy

- We live in a world that is untrusting. The proliferation of wild conspiracy theories and distrust of government and distrust of authority of any kind comes from somewhere. Often it comes from actual untrustworthiness on the part of those entities. But often the person who struggles with trust has become that way because of a breach of trust by someone significant in their past. The trustworthy woman does good, and no harm. Those who know her learn trust and learn how to be trustworthy.

Notice how skilled she is

- Not everybody can be a wonderful seamstress or a wonderful cook or a skilled teacher. The plain truth is, not everybody can be everything this woman described in our text is. After all I'm certain that there are only two or three of you who have ever spun wool right? I know that some of you are great seamstresses and have clothing and quilts to show for it – but not everyone is skilled in that way. Some are good cooks

who thrive on kitchen creations, but others cooks to provide for loved ones like this lady in Proverbs 31 who gets up long before daylight to provide food for her family. The point is, each of you have unique skills that are a blessing to those you love.

- That is why when she utilizes her gifting and skills, make sure that she knows how appreciated she is—there it is again, don't take her for granted.
- Similarly . . .

Notice how resourceful she is

- In a society where women were often viewed as little more than property, this woman sought out the wool and flax for making clothing for her family. She also knew where the food was to found that she needed to bring in. She even *purchases a field and plants a vineyard* in verse 16. This doesn't sound like an oppressed and put upon member of the weaker sex, instead she is a go-getter who knows what needs to be done and does it with ease. All the while *she does not eat the bread of idleness*. (v.27b) Our lady doesn't let the grass grow under her feet.
- Notice also her business acumen. She's skillfully manages the profit in what she makes and what she produces on her farm. As I just said, she knows how to get things done, and how to do them, or who she can get to get things done. Because she's resourceful.
- And she meets adversity head-on. Listen, *She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet. She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple*. Proverbs 31:21-22. Snow in Jerusalem is not unheard of and, certainly, it didn't mean school closings or snow days 3,000 years ago. But it did mean that it was COLD and the people of Israel for less prepared for that than your average Ohioan is. But the Proverbs 31 woman was ready for it. Her people are warmed and clothed.
- She also *laughs at the time to come*. (v. 25b). She's not frightened by the future. Verse 30 refers to her as a woman who fears the Lord and a woman of God is not afraid of a future that is in the hands of her Maker. She is resourceful because she is rock solid in faith.
- And . . .

She is generous

- *She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy*. (v. 20). Not only is she alert for the needs of her own loved ones, her heart is open to care for those who are not part of her household. She is a woman of God, so she doesn't hold back.

She is a woman of wisdom

- She has lived life and she is a keen observer of people and it has cultivated a depth and knowledge that is obvious when she speaks. (v. 26) But notice in that same verse that her wisdom comes anointed with kindness. That's why it is wisdom rather than merely spouting knowledge.
- A woman like this is her husband's best advisor and her children's wisest teacher. In fact she is the go-to mentor because when she talks, people listen.

She adds value to everyone

- *Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land*. (v. 23) He didn't get there on his own. His wife speaks into his life and makes him look real good.
- *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."* (v. 28). It's not her intention, but they can't help but give her praise because of what she brings to their lives. The words of her husband are not idle talk – they are the praise of a blest man who knows the gift he has.

Conclusion: This is the gift we celebrate on Mother's Day. It's more than a Hallmark holiday. It's more than a dozen roses and a meal that she DID NOT have to cook. It's a realization *that Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised*. (v. 30). We celebrate you women of God! We know you are not this woman here in Proverbs 31 because she is an ideal composite of the woman of God. But you're close! So we give you *of the fruit of your hands, and let your works praise you from the mountain tops*. (v. 31) Let's rise up and call her blessed. Amen.