



**Idea:** The woman of Proverbs 31 provides a model of godliness and femininity in the home.

**Intro:** Can you imagine what your life would be like today, if it were not for your mother? Our moms have done so much for us. First and foremost, they carried us into this life. They fed us and changed our diapers. They made sure we were clean and looked good. They spent countless hours teaching us how to read and helping with our homework. They drove us to all kinds of practices for band, softball, football, basketball, and dance. They listened to our bad days and held us when we were sad. They proudly stood by when we married the love of our lives. They glistened when their grandchildren were born. And they have not stopped spoiling them since. They are always there to listen and give advice when needed. Where would we be today if it were not for our moms?

Mothers, I want to thank you for being who you are: selfless, giving, serving, helping, and often tired. You are awesome! Our children are blessed because of you, and the dads in the room are blessed because of you.

Obviously, there are ladies here today who have not had children. Perhaps, you were not able to have children, but more than likely you have been a mother figure in a child's life. Thank you for your influence and care in the lives of children.

On this Mother's Day we honor moms. This holiday, as celebrated in America, is only about 100 years old, but motherhood has been celebrated for thousands of years in other cultures around the world. For Christians this celebration involves honoring motherhood through the lens of God's revelation. God loves mothers. The Bible honors women by disclosing their inclusion in God's divine purposes from creation to the new creation. Eve, Sarah, Jochebed, Ruth, and Mary are all beautiful examples of women who are tethered to the unfolding of God's divine purposes.

While motherhood is celebrated and honored in the Bible, in our culture today there is a growing confusion surrounding this role. We live in a day in which more and more people believe motherhood should not be gender specific. "Birthing people" is a new title being used, and trans-women are recognized as biological females. In addition to these blurring lines, moms face cultural and financial pressures to build careers and work outside the home. If that were not enough, moms are constantly bombarded with the never-ending pressure to measure up to the images of the perfect mother portrayed on social media. Their Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest feeds are filled with posts and pictures of the ideal woman and mother. Her hair and makeup are fabulous. She is dressed in the latest fashion, cooks the best meals, and has flawless children. This mom looks like a model with four kids in tow.

On this Mother's Day, I want to talk to you about a model mom, but this is a different kind of model. This model mom is found in Proverbs 31. She is a model of godliness and femininity. These are two traits that we need to recommit ourselves to celebrating in our homes and with our moms.

Read Proverbs 31:10-31.

**Inquiry:** This proverbial passage was written in a chiasmic manner with the declaration that the husband is highly regarded at the gate being the center point (vs. 23). Every other verse praises the wife. This focus on the esteem the husband commands may seem like an intrusion, but it actually establishes the central message: this woman is the kind of wife a man needs in order to be successful in life. We need to remember that Proverbs was originally intended to give wisdom to young men rather than young women. This gender slant is simply a matter of audience and not ideological bias. It directs the reader away from the prostitute and toward the good wife. It also affirms the Bible's understanding of gender. The Word of God establishes the equality of men and women as those who have been created in the image of God. They, therefore, share equal value, worth, dignity, and importance. There is no superiority and no inferiority. The focus on the husband does not mean this passage cannot be used to instruct women. It provides a model for godliness and femininity in the home.

It is probably best to begin with a clear understanding of femininity, and we cannot understand it without also talking about masculinity. In the creation of humanity, God created man and woman (Gen 1:27). Adam, the man, was created first. God tasked him with the roles of provider and protector. This is what it means to be masculine. Eve was then created by God from Adam's rib. She was made as a "helper fit" for the man (Gen 2:18). She was tasked with the roles of nurturer and life-giver. This is what it means to be feminine. The two complement one another in their quest to exercise dominion over the earth and to fill it.

So, with that biblical understanding, on this Sunday as we celebrate mothers, let's look at this model mom.

A woman who expresses biblical femininity...

### **1. Uses her strength selflessly and wisely.**

We see here a picture of feminine industry and ingenuity in verses 13-19. This woman develops a textile business and burns the midnight oil so she can help provide for her family and for others in need. Notice in verse 17 that real femininity literally involves strength! This woman uses her strength to get solid work done and to care for the poor. While her hands are busy in the embodied physical world, she also blesses others with her spiritual counsel. In verse 26, she speaks wisdom and teaches kindness. Her mouth is not shut. Her words bless others and point them to God.

This approach to motherhood is what godly femininity looks like. Moms, God looks down approvingly as you get up in the middle of the night to feed and change your baby. He smiles over you as you may have to push pause on your career to dedicate yourself to your children's education and future. He welcomes your desire to utilize your strength and creativity to help your family. Let's not forget that the Proverbs 31 woman operated a business. So, whether you work outside the home or not, God honors wives and mothers who use their strength and wisdom to help nurture and bring life in the home. This is biblical femininity, which brings us to a second point.

### **2. Works to bless her family and the community.**

As mentioned earlier, femininity involves nurturing life. This is exactly what this woman does as she generously feeds the poor and clothes her own children (vs. 20-28). Even though she can do many things, notice how devoted she is to being a helper to her husband and her children. She has business endeavors outside the home, but not primarily for the sake of her own reputation or fulfillment. Her work benefits her family and her neighbors.

We are looking at this passage from the vantage point of mothers, but this principle applies to all women. It applies to those who are single, married with no children, and married with children. There are many examples of women in the Bible that are noteworthy in their efforts to bless others. There is Tabitha in Acts 9:36, which says she was “*full of good works and acts of charity*”. Then there is Phoebe in Romans 16:1, which says she was “*a servant of the church at Cenchrea*” who had been a *patron of many*, including the Apostle Paul. We do not know if these women were married, but it is telling that their husbands are not named. They are simply noted for how they nourished and cultivated life in others.

From the perspective of motherhood, a woman who expresses biblical femininity works to bless her family and the community. She takes delight in feeding, clothing, nursing, teaching, and caring for her children. She does not do these things because they are easy. No, we all know that doing and carrying out these duties is exhausting. There is no end to a child’s appetite. Their stomachs are bottomless pits. Moms are constantly washing, mending, and buying clothes. Kids are always getting hurt. Band-Aids are in high demand. Early on the hurts are typically boo-boos, but as kids move into their teens the hurts become more emotional and deeper. Moms are there with their arms opened wide to hold, listen, and impart wisdom. A mom does these things because she loves her children and desires to nurture life in them. She works to bless her family and the community.

### **3. Fears the Lord.**

Read Proverbs 31:29-31.

In a day when external beauty is often the only thing noticed, the Holy Spirit wants to remind us here that true beauty is found in a heart that reverences and adores God. According to verse 30, this woman knows that God is her judge, and that God is the one whom she must love and serve above all else.

The fear of God is the motivation that fuels everything else. The model mom uses her strength selflessly and wisely because she fears God. She works to bless her family and community because she first fears God. Her inner beauty outshines her external beauty. She has learned to walk with God by reading His Word, seeking His face through prayer, serving His people in the church, and sharing His gospel with the lost.

Moms does your life resemble what we see in this mom in Proverbs? She presents a model version that may seem unattainable. I understand that she may seem like the Bible’s version of those moms coming across your Instagram and Facebook feeds. I want you to be encouraged rather than discouraged today.

#### A Word of Encouragement

The example of the Proverbs 31 woman is meant to be freeing rather than discouraging.

I realize some women can feel weighed down when they read Proverbs 31. They know how short they fall from this standard. So, remember, the book of Proverbs is just that – proverbial wisdom for life. This woman is described in an idealized way. Like a love poem or sonnet. The author is highlighting her strengths. His point here is not to dwell on her sins and weaknesses. In fact, this text is an acrostic poem, he starts each line with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which reflects a sense of completion. The point being that it is okay if you feel a bit exhausted when you read of all this woman’s accomplishments. We should not see Proverbs 31 like a Pinterest page or Instagram feed from some domestic diva that you cannot live up to! This is a poetic profile; it leaves out the dirty laundry, the rebellious kids, and the weariness with fighting sin and temptation. If you feel like you do not measure up to the Proverbs 31 woman, that is the whole point. This picture of godly femininity should beckon you to depend on the Lord. He is your Savior. He is your Provider. He is your Protector.

**Conclusion:** The last thing you need is another Instagram mom to measure yourself against. The model mom in Proverbs 31 has not been given to us as that kind of an example. She presents the characteristics of a nurturing, life-giving mother who is living out her femininity. This mother is selfless and wise. She puts her families and others before herself. And the only way she can do these things is because she has a healthy fear of the Lord. She knows that God is her strength and stamina. He undergirds and fills her with His love, power, and ability. This model mom is not a super mom, but she is connected and reliant on a Super God.

Moms, I want you to be encouraged on this Mother's Day. I want you to know that God loves you. I want you to feel the deep appreciation that the dads and kids in this room have for you. You are special, and we love you. If you are discouraged and do not feel like you measure up to what you think the standard is, then you are in good company. The Bible tells us that we can never measure up to the standard. God is the standard. It is not the Instagram mom, so please take your eyes off her and like the Proverbs 31 woman put them on the Lord. Fear Him. Lean into Jesus and trust Him to help you model biblical femininity in your home as you nurture life in your children and husband. Dads let's show our appreciation and love for moms. Let's recommit ourselves to pray for and encourage them.

This woman in Proverbs is a model, but there is an even better model. Jesus Christ is the One we look at for hope. Do you know Him? Has He changed your life?

Good news: God loves you. He created you and desires to know you.

Bad news: You are a sinner in rebellion against your Creator.

Best news: God has done everything necessary to justly deal with your sin and bring forgiveness and restoration to your life. Today, He calls you to turn from your sin and self and turn to Him as Savior and Lord. Do you need to be forgiven? Maybe you feel like an outcast or that you have sinned beyond the scope of forgiveness. Levi's story makes it clear that Jesus' reach is wide.

Jesus knows everything about you. He has assessed your life and knows your sin. In the face of your sin, He has also issued a call. Will you today decide to follow Him?