

“THE GODLY WOMAN”

(Proverbs 31:10-31)

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[PROPS NEEDED: “*Godly Women*” Video; MSG & NRSV Bibles]

[NOTE: NO scripture read before sermon at Traditional Service]

[East Cobb U.M.C.; 5-8-11]

–I–

1. [WATCH VIDEO: “*Godly Women*” from SermonSpice.com (Total Time – 1:16)]
2. What *does* it mean to be a Godly Woman in today’s world.? It’s a question that today’s scripture from Proverbs 31 was specifically written to address in its day and time.

A–The Book of Proverbs itself is an accumulation of wisdom and sayings that people collected through the years that were then written down, to be taught to future generations.

1–And what we find in Chapter 31 is the wisdom one mother shared with her son, “*King Lemuel.*”<sup>1</sup>

2–And what she’s wanting to impress upon him are the qualities that he needs to be looking for as he’s looking for a Godly wife,... which is why some translations title this passage “*In Praise of A Worthy Wife.*”

3–But the Hebrew word (*ishshah*) actually merely means “*woman*” (not just “*wife*”).<sup>2</sup>

B–So, as we read this passage today, I want us to understand that Lemuel’s mother is not just saying that these are traits found only in Godly *wives*, but more generally are *also* to be found in *all* women of faith.

3. So with that in mind, I want us to explore some of the *qualities of a Godly woman* that we find in Proverbs 31, and how these are applicable for us today.

–II–

4. First of all, today’s scripture indicates that a Godly woman is a woman of **CHARACTER** – of “*moral excellence and firmness,*” as the dictionary puts it.<sup>3</sup>

A–Listen to how Verses 10-12 put it... (**Read scriptures:** 9:30am, MSG; 11am, NRSV)

B–Now, if you listened carefully, what you heard there were qualities that indicate *character*: ...someone who is trustworthy; loyal to their word; faithful in their actions; gracious, kind; and generous – these are some of the qualities that indicate integrity and character.

C–And they are qualities that not only Lemuel’s mother encouraged her son to look for, but they’re also some of the “*unwavering*” standards/qualities that today’s video pointed out.

5. A second quality found in a Godly woman (according to Proverbs 31) is **DILIGENCE** – that is: Godly women are hardworking, creative, and industrious.

A–We find this in Verses 13-19, where the “ideal” woman described by Lemuel’s mother is always hard at work... (**Read scriptures:** 9:30am, MSG; 11am, NRSV)

B–Now, I know the women who are mothers among us will agree that this quality of diligence is actually a *given* for motherhood – I don’t know of a mother (including my wife and my *own* mother) who’re *not* constantly hard at work in what they do.

1–It’s like the Teacher who gave her Second Grade class a lesson on the *magnet* and what it does. And on the next’s day’s test, she included this question: “*My full name has six letters. The first one is 'M.' I pick up things. What am I?*” And when the test papers were turned in, she was surprised to find that over half the students had given the answer: “*Mother.*”

2–Now, this quality of diligence is certainly true of mothers, but it’s also true of most all Godly women that I know, as well.

6. And that’s why a third quality of Godly women is **COMPASSION** for others.

A–Verse 20 clearly says (MSG) “*She’s quick to assist anyone in need, (and) reaches out to help the poor*” (NRSV) “*She opens her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hand to the needy.*”

B–Godly women are *not* so focused on their own needs (or even those of their family) that they’re blind to the hurts and pains of others around them.

C–In fact, those of you who’re biological mothers will probably agree that the experience of motherhood itself may have made you *more* empathetic to the needs of those around you, making “*compassion*” a quality that’s *learned* through life experiences.

7. And what’s more is that a Godly woman is also a **CHAMPION** for her family... whether it be her biological and legal family (like her children, husband, parents, and siblings), or even merely those who are “like” family in her workplace, neighborhood, church, or school.

A–Listen to how Verses 21-29 explains this... (**Read scriptures:** 9:30am, MSG; 11am, NRSV)

B–Here we read the characteristics of a woman who *protects* and *provides* for her family (through her own diligence), who *promotes* them to others (rather than complaining about or tearing them down just because they’re not perfect), and who *prepares* them for the difficult challenges and realities of life through her own words, actions and behaviors.

C—And yet, how is a woman do this in today’s hectic world? Or, as one woman from today’s video puts it, “*How can we be pulled in all directions without being pulled apart?*”

8. Well, I believe the answer to that lies in the final quality that Lemuel’s mother taught him to look for: ...a woman who has a sincere and steadfast **COMMITMENT** to God.

A—Verse 30 says that (MSG) “*Charm can mislead and beauty soon fades, [but] the woman to be admired and praised is the woman who lives in the Fear-of-God” (NRSV) “*Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.*”*

B—Now, understand that the phrase “*fear-of-God / fears the Lord*” doesn’t mean literally *afraid* (as in.. terrified, frightened, or filled with apprehension), but instead is used here in the biblical sense of “*reverence, respect*” and being “*filled with awe.*”<sup>4</sup>

1—It’s meant to describe the attitude that all people of faith are to have towards God – not one of alarm or dread that an “angry God” is going to “get us,” but one where we choose to live with a continual sense of awe, respect, and thankfulness for a God who loves us more than deserve, and gives us more than we can ever repay – *that* is what “*fear-of-God / fear of the Lord*” really means in the Bible.

2—And so, here it’s the writer’s way of saying that more than charm and beauty, a *Godly* woman will have this kind of reverent awareness of God’s presence in their life at all times.

3—It’s an awareness that’ll inform their thoughts, influence their words, and shape their behavior – it doesn’t mean that they’re perfect, but it *does* mean that they know that their identity and strength in life ultimately come from God alone.

C—You see, this verse is essentially saying that the most beautiful thing in the world is a woman filled with the love of (and a reverence for) God.

–III–

9. So, here in Proverbs 31, we find words of wisdom from a mother to her son about what she’s discovered are the qualities of a Godly woman: ...

A—...*Character, Diligence, Compassion*, willingness to be a *Champion* for her family, and her own sincere, steadfast *Commitment* to God.

B—My prayer is that as you celebrate this Mothers’s Day, you’ll not only give thanks to God for your *own* mother, but also for all the “*Godly Women*” in our lives who help make us the people we are today.

10. [PRAY]

**ENDNOTES:**

1. The Hebrew word “*lemuel*” literally means “*devoted / belonging to God.*” As such, biblical scholars are unclear as to whether or not “*King Lemuel*” was an actual historical figure, or merely a metaphorical way to refer to any king/leader who is “*devoted to God.*” [Read the article “*Lemuel*” by B.T. Dahlberg in The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible].
2. Hebrew word #H802 in Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries
3. Definition of “*Character*” found in Merriam-Webster Dictionary.
4. Hebrew word “*yáré*”, #H3373 in Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries.