

Text: Proverbs 31:10-31

Title: “Street Smarts ... For Moms”

Open your Bibles to the last chapter of Proverbs ... Proverbs 31:10. These weeks we’re walking through the book of Proverbs ... a series I’m calling “Street Smarts.” We’re learning how to download the wisdom of God into our lives to navigate the “streets” or paths where life takes us. Now we’re going to fast forward today to the last verses of the book ... Proverbs 31:10. You’ll need your Bibles open.

ILLUSTRATION – I went to pick out a Mother’s Day card for Nan last week. There were others on the same mission. I noticed that some walked quickly through the Mother’s Day section, spied one card, took a quick glance at the front of the card and off they went to the checkout. Others spent a lot of time looking for just the right card ... carefully reading, not just the message on the front, but also the one on the inside. After a lot of thought they made their selection. Which kind of card shopper are you?

If they had Mother’s Day cards in the days of ancient Israel this section of Proverbs would have made a great one. You see Proverbs 31:10-31 is a beautiful poem written to honor not just mothers, but women and wives in general. It’s what is called an acrostic poem, meaning that each of the 22 verses starting in v.10 begins with a successive letter in the Hebrew ... v.10 starts with Aleph, v.11 with Beth, v.12 with Gimmel and all the way through the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. We’re not sure who wrote this wisdom poem, but someone took a great deal of effort and time to choose just the right words ... it’s a work of art. Perhaps they hoped that it would be not just *beautiful*, but also *memorable*. Acrostics are a device to help us remember something. And that’s what happening here starting at ...

Proverbs 31:10 - A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.

The wise poet will roll out one admirable quality after another through the end of the chapter. These are qualities that should be **ASPIRED** to by all women, single or married, whether they’re a mother or not. These are qualities that should be **ATTRACTIVE** to young men looking for a wife. The verse says “A wife of noble character who can find?” Then these are qualities that should be **APPRECIATED** by husbands and children. We’ll see in a moment how this poem ends with tremendous appreciation for her.

You’ll notice that nowhere is physical beauty mentioned among these qualities. It seems that the message our culture sends to us is that physical beauty is all that matters. No, the Scriptures aim at a more supreme beauty described here in these verses. Let me point out a few of them as we scan down through this poem. It speaks first of ...

HER CHARACTER

Proverbs 31:10 - A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.

Noble character means the excellence of integrity and consistency. And her excellence is displayed in...

HER HELPFULNESS

Proverbs 31:11-12 - Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.

She is most successful when others around her, including her husband and children, are helped to be the best they can be.

HER DILIGENCE

Proverbs 31:13 - She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.

Eager hands are willing hands. It means that she delights in her work, even though it is the most difficult and demanding work on the face of the earth. Next there is the excellence of ...

HER STRENGTH

Proverbs 31:17 - She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.

ILLUSTRATION – By now you're thinking, "This woman is Wonder Woman." I heard about one woman who said, "I'm Wonder Woman. I *wonder* where I left my phone. I *wonder* how I gained this weight. I *wonder* where my money has gone. I wonder where I put my keys. I *wonder* why I *wonder*."

The wise poet continues with the excellence of...

HER COMPASSION

Proverbs 31:20 - She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.

HER DIGNITY

Proverbs 31:25 - She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.

This is where a woman's true beauty comes from. A woman's physical beauty may attract a man to her. Her spiritual beauty will attract the man to God.

HER WISDOM

Proverbs 31:26 - She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

I think about the countless opportunities during the day that our moms spoke truth into our lives. Aren't we grateful?

HER RESPONSIBILITY

Proverbs 31:27 - She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

And finally we come to the excellence of ...

HER PRAISE

Proverbs 31:28 - Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

ILLUSTRATION –What if , God forbid, your mom was killed in a car wreck and her funeral is Tuesday. What would you wish on Tuesday that you had told her today? Well, do it! Tell her. Give her the praise she deserves. It will encourage her. It will strengthen her. It will cause you to worship God for His wisdom in giving us mothers. And if you don't know what to say...

Proverbs 31:29 - “Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.”

“Noble” is the same word we started with in v.10 where it talks about the woman of “noble” character.

Now I'm aware of the fact that while this list of excellent qualities is intended to inspire women to excellence, it can also have the opposite effect. Sometimes we read lists like this and think about the many ways we fall short. Or it just adds to the load of expectations that feel almost impossible to achieve.

Well, the next verse will be good news for those of you who feel beat down by the impossibility of lists like this. It shows us where does this excellence comes from?

Proverbs 31:30 - Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

The source of all these virtues is the fear of the Lord. And what this does is free us from chasing that illusive image of success that the world puts on us or that we put on ourselves. So the overwhelming focus of this woman's life is not what others think of (husband, kids,

society). The overwhelming focus is what God thinks of her. She fears the Lord. Now what does that mean?

STREET SMARTS FOR MOMS WHO FEAR THE LORD:

- **The fear of the Lord makes you take God seriously.**

That's what it means to fear the Lord. It means we take His holiness seriously. We take His worship seriously. We take His Word seriously.

Proverbs 3:7 - Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.

- **The fears of the Lord makes you run to God, not away from Him.**

Sometimes if we take God seriously it can cause us think that we could never please a God like that and we run from Him. That's a dangerous thing to do.

ILLUSTRATION – For instance, suppose your child is playing in the front yard and you see that they are getting dangerously close to the street. You shout at your child to stop, which frightens them and causes them to run even closer to the danger of the street because they are afraid you will punish them. No. The safest thing they can do is to run to you.

True fear of the Lord will cause you to run to the mercy of God as a refuge.

Isaiah 8:13-14a - The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, and he will be a sanctuary...

The fear of the Lord causes us to run to God not from Him. And when we run to God we run to Jesus for salvation, for forgiveness, for redemption and for purpose. Jesus becomes a refuge for you, but also for your family.

- **The fear of the Lord helps you provide spiritual protection for your family.**

Proverbs 14:26 - He who fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge.

The fear of the Lord makes us prayer warriors. One of the greatest ministries a wife and mom can have is the ministry of intercession. You can't provide everything your family needs, but God can. You can't protect your family from all the dangers in the world, but God can. Cover your family with spiritual protection.

- **The fear of the Lord motivates you to give wise instruction.**

Proverbs 9:10 says that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” That’s where it starts.

Proverbs 31:26 - She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

So it goes from God’s mouth to your mouth. Never underestimate the power of the Word of God flowing from you to your family. “Faithful instruction” means literally the teaching of kindness (*hesed* = mercy = God’s unfailing love).

- **The fear of the Lord frees you to let God’s love sustain you.**

Psalm 103:11 - For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;

ILLUSTRATION – The ladies in my house are big fans of the hit TV series *Fixer Upper*. Joanna Gaines and her husband Chip live down in Waco and they host this show where they help people find old homes (fixer-uppers) they can buy and renovate. Joanna knows the challenges of balancing the many demands of being a woman, a wife, a mom and business owner ... but the big thing is that she is a woman who fears the Lord. I want you to see how that looks in her life. Listen to Joanna’s story: VIDEO

The Lord loves and sustains those who fear Him. Take off your Wonder Woman cape and just let God’s love nourish and sustain you. Throw yourself on His grace and mercy.

A MOTHER'S DAY GREETING BY AMY YOUNG

To those who lost a child this year – we mourn with you

To those who are in the trenches with little ones every day and wear the badge of food stains – we appreciate you

To those who experienced loss through miscarriage, failed adoptions, or running away—we mourn with you

To those who walk the hard path of infertility, fraught with pokes, prods, tears, and disappointment – we walk with you.

To those who are foster moms, mentor moms, and spiritual moms – we need you

To those who have warm and close relationships with your children – we celebrate with you

To those who have disappointment, heart ache, and distance with your children – we sit with you

To those who lost their mothers this year – we grieve with you

To those who experienced abuse at the hands of your own mother – we acknowledge your experience

To those who lived through driving tests, medical tests, and the overall testing of motherhood – we are better for having you in our midst

To those who are single and long to be married and mothering your own children – we mourn that life has not turned out the way you longed for

To those who step-parent – we walk with you on these complex paths

To those who envisioned lavishing love on grandchildren -yet that dream is not to be, we grieve with you

To those who will have emptier nests in the upcoming year – we grieve and rejoice with you

To those who placed children up for adoption — we commend you for your selflessness and remember how you hold that child in your heart

And to those who are pregnant with new life, both expected and surprising –we anticipate with you

This Mother's Day, we walk with you. Mothering is not for the faint of heart and we have real warriors in our midst. We remember you.