

“THE VALUE OF MOTHERHOOD”

Proverbs 31

May 11, 2025

In her article, "Life in Our House," in the magazine *Christian Parenting Today*

(March/April 2000), Sheri B. of Portage, Michigan, wrote this account. She said, “My three young children loved to get up early and watch out the window for the garbage truck. They took great delight in watching the waste hauler empty the can, then work the lever that caused the truck to compact the trash.

“On the morning of my thirty-fifth birthday, my husband said to the children with a smile, ‘Kids, do you know what makes today so special?’

“It should have been no surprise to us when our 5-year-old rushed past my outstretched arms to the window and replied, ‘It's garbage day!’”¹ Not exactly what she was hoping for! But we gotta love them anyway, right?

Many times women find themselves on the short end of the stick, taken for granted, forgotten, and unfortunately used only for the delights and advantages of others. But women are important contributors to our society and our world, for they are blessed with the ability to encourage, build into, lift up, and support those around them in ways that changes the lives of many others. God has blessed women with the ability to feel the hurts and pains of another, to show love to those who are hurting, and to change those lives for the glory of God. And most women use these attributes to make a positive difference in our communities. So they deserve recognition for their positive contributions to the betterment of our world.

Gordon McDonald gives us a great example of how a woman can demonstrate God’s mothering nature to others. He says, “[My wife], Gail, and I were in an airplane, flying to Boston. We were seated almost at the back of the airliner in the two aisle seats across from each

¹ (PreachingToday.com, *More Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003] pg. 187

other. As the plane loaded up, a woman with two small children came down the aisle to take the seat right in front of us. And behind her, another woman. The two women took the A and C seats, and one of the children sat in the middle seat, and the second child was on the lap of one of the women. I figured these were two mothers traveling together with their kids, and I hoped the kids wouldn't be noisy.

“The flight started, and my prayer wasn't answered. The two children had a tough time. The air was turbulent that day, the children cried a lot—their ears hurt—and it was a miserable flight. I watched as these two women kept trying to help and comfort the two children. The woman at the window played with the girl in the middle seat, trying to make her feel good and paying lots of attention to her.

“I thought, *These women get a medal for what they are doing*. But things only went downhill from there. As we got towards the last part of the flight, the child in the middle seat got sick. The next thing I knew she was losing everything from every part of her body. The diaper wasn't on tight, and before long a stench began to rise throughout the cabin. It was unbearable!

“I could see over the top of the seat that indescribable stuff was all over everything. It was on this woman's clothes. It was all over the seat. It was on the floor. It was one of the most repugnant things I had seen in a long time.

“I watched as the woman next to the window patiently comforted the child and tried her best to clean up the mess and make something good out of a bad situation. The plane landed, and when we pulled up to the gate all of us were ready to exit that plane as fast as we could. The flight attendant came up with paper towels and handed them to the woman in the window seat and said, ‘Here, Ma'am, these are for your little girl.’

“The woman looked up and said, ‘This isn't my little girl.’

“Aren't you traveling together?’ the stewardess asked.

“No, I've never met this woman and these children before in my life.”

“Suddenly I realized this woman had just been merciful, and demonstrated true mothering love to the little girl next to her. A lot of us would have just died in this circumstance. However, she had found the opportunity to give mercy, encouragement, support, and help, even in a most desperate situation. She was, in the words of Christ, ‘the person who was the neighbor,’” and what Proverbs 31 says, “*a woman of noble character.*”² She put others before herself, and showed love, even when it was difficult.

So let me read to you the rest of Proverbs 31 so that you understand what I’m talking about. These are verses 10-31. (READ Proverbs 31)

God has given women tremendous capabilities that they can use to touch the hearts and lives of those around them, providing love and support. While some women use their God-given capabilities only to fulfill their own desires, most women will use those capabilities and skills and character to interact with others and bring about the good in those around them. God’s mothering characteristics are then able to impact families and communities through the lives of the women of the world.

God’s sacrificial nature in women is demonstrated by the self-giving that so many mothers make for their children. When danger is eminent, women naturally want to protect their loved ones, and sometimes it comes as the ultimate sacrifice of giving their own lives for the sake the ones they love.

Take for example the “Northwest Airlines flight 225 that crashed just after taking off from the Detroit airport, killing 155 people on August 16, 1987. One passenger survived: a four-year-old from Tempe, Arizona, named Cecelia.

² (PreachingToday.com, *Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2002] pg. 181-182)

“News accounts say when rescuers found Cecelia they did not believe she had been on the plane. Investigators first assumed Cecelia had been a passenger in one of the cars on the highway onto which the airliner crashed. But when the passenger register for the flight was checked, there was Cecelia's name.

“Cecelia survived because, even as the plane was falling, Cecelia's mother, Paula Chican, unbuckled her own seat belt, got down on her knees in front of her daughter, wrapped her arms and body around Cecelia, and then would not let her go.

“Nothing could separate that child from her parent's love—neither tragedy nor disaster, neither the fall nor the flames that followed, neither height nor depth, neither life nor death.” While Paula died in the plane crash, Cecilia lived because of the sacrifice made by her mother.

In her love for her daughter, Paula demonstrated God's love. For “such is the love of our Savior, Jesus, for us. He left heaven, lowered himself to us, and covered us with the sacrifice of his own body to save us”³ so that we, too, could live. That's the loving nature given to women to share with those around them.

God has also gifted women in the ability to give guidance to others. So many people are in need of help in so many areas of their lives, and women are able to counsel and guide others to make good choices and decisions.

In the first 9 verses of Proverbs 31, we hear how King Lemuel's mother counseled and encouraged him to make wise decisions regarding some essentials in life. She warns Lemuel about the lures of the world that often lead us into trouble. So she says, “*Do not spend your strength on women, your vigor on those who ruin kings. It is not for kings, Lemuel - it is not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer, lest they drink and forget what has been decreed, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights...Speak up for those who cannot speak for*

³ (PreachingToday.com, *Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2002] pg. 56)

themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Vs. 3-5, 8-9). Lemuel’s mother wanted the best for her son, so she gave him wisdom to live by. Her guidance influenced his life so that he did well as a king of Israel.

Likewise, “President Dwight Eisenhower described his mother as a smart and saintly lady. (He said,) ‘Often in this job (as president) I’ve wished I could consult her. But she is in heaven. However, many times I have felt I knew what she would say.’

He recalls as a child “one night in their farm home, when Mrs. Eisenhower was playing a card game with her boys. ‘Now, don’t get me wrong,’ said the former president, ‘it was not with those cards that have kings, queens, jacks, and spades on them. Mother was too straitlaced for that.’ President Eisenhower said the game they were playing was called Flinch.

“Anyway, Mother was the dealer, and she dealt me a very bad hand. I began to complain. Mother said, ‘Boys, put down your cards. I want to say something, particularly to Dwight. You are in a game in your home with your mother and brothers who love you. But out in the world you will be dealt bad hands without love. Here is some advice for you boys. Take those bad hands without complaining and play them out. Ask God to help you, and you will win the important game called life.’” The president added, ‘I’ve tried to follow that wise advice always.’”⁴

Wisdom shared by women to those around them has made the difference in the lives of many leaders of many countries throughout the span of history. Some of those leaders received that wisdom and lived well to make a great impact in the lives of those they led. Others disregarded the wisdom given to them, and found their lives turning up-side-down in disaster and destruction. Women have the ability to impact many others as they provide wisdom to those around them.

⁴ (PreachingToday.com, *More Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003] pg. 198)

And women have the nature within them to share the comfort of God with those who are hurting. They may not understand the situation that surrounds the life of another, but their compassion for the hurting puts them in places where comfort is given.

“Lenard Sweet recounts a letter a physician wrote to a church-related magazine, *Postmodern Pilgrims*. The doctor says;

“Today I visited an eight-year-old girl dying of cancer. Her body was disfigured by her disease and its treatment. She was in almost constant pain. As I entered her room, I was overcome immediately by her suffering--so unjust, so unfair, so unreasonable. Even more overpowering was the presence of her grandmother lying in bed beside her with her huge body embracing this precious, inhuman suffering.

“I stood in awe, for I knew I was on holy ground. . . . The suffering of innocent children is horrifying beyond words. I will never forget the great, gentle arms and body of this grandmother. She never spoke while I was there. She was holding and participating in suffering that she could not relieve, and somehow her silent presence was relieving it. No words could express the magnitude of her love.”⁵

Women comfort the hurting, encourage the lonely, guide the lost, support the weak, nurture the vulnerable, and love the unlovable. At the Good News Global jail and prison ministry banquet last week one of the speakers told of a woman who came to his prison cell to tell him how much God loved him and that God was going to do something great through him. She persisted in convincing the guards that she needed to see the inmate, and then had to visit him multiple times to get him to even listen to her tell about the wonderful saving grace of Jesus Christ. But each time she was there, she told him that he was loved, and that God had something great to do through him to positively touch the lives of others for Him. Her compassion for this

⁵ (PreachingToday.com, *More Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003] pg. 48-49)

inmate won him over and he indeed, not only became a believer in Jesus Christ, but went on to help other inmates come to know about Jesus, too. This one woman made the difference in one man, who went on to touch the lives of many for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 31 tells the nature of a godly woman who used her God-given talents and abilities to touch the lives of not only her husband and family, but all those in her community. She put into practice the gifts of God so that she positively impacted all of those around her. She was creative, she was resourceful, she was diligent, she was discrete, and she was faithful. Her untiring work touched the lives of the elite as well as the common and ordinary. She gave of herself to benefit her whole community, seeing that needs were met and hearts were touched.

Many people hold that this is the value of mothers, but it is a nature given to all women to use for the glory of God. As we celebrate Mother's Day, we praise God for the blessings He bestows upon women to be able to touch the lives of others. It is a day that we can thank God for showing His love and compassion and wisdom to us through mothers.

But it is important that we acknowledge that there are some women who have a difficult time with Mother's Day because they cannot have children of their own. It is heartbreaking! They long to hold and nurture a little one of their own, but for some reason they are not allowed that honor. Their arms ache to hold their own, yet God has still gifted them with the ability to show mothering love to those around them, be it family or friends. They are able to be women of noble character to make an impact in the lives of others who struggle. They are able to love those who are desperate to be loved. They are able to provide wisdom to those who are searching for guidance and direction. And they are able to comfort the ones that are hurting. Even though their arms are empty of their own children, there are children all around to show love to. In this way, they become mothers to a whole community of people around them.

So today we recognize the value of motherhood, and we say “Thank you!” to each woman for the influence they have made in the hearts and lives of others. Each of us is who we are partly because of our mother’s influence to us, and my prayer is that the wisdom she shared with us is being used in our own lives to touch those around us.

It is also a day to lift women up to the Lord and give thanks to Him for blessing them with the special gifts of showing love, giving wisdom, granting fierce protection, and providing guidance to those around them so that their lives might forever be changed positively, for the good of every community.

Let’s pray. Father, thank You for the many gifts You have given to women so that they might support, build into, encourage and love those around them. Thank You for the ways You have gifted them to nurture and comfort and care for others, even though it might be challenging or awkward. Thank You for the special and unique gifts You give to women so that they might provide life for others. Thanks You for showing Your great love through them to help us to know that we are special in Your sight.

As we celebrate Mother’s Day today, bless each mom with the wisdom to raise their children in ways that follow Your ways and in Your commandments. Help them to be marvelous examples of Your great love for us. Lead them, Lord. And we pray that You would bless each woman so that she might use Your gifts wisely to positively impact all those around her. This we pray in the great Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.