

Is This Really Possible?

Proverbs 31:10-31

By no means do I speak as an expert but only as an observer on this very special occasion in which we honor mothers today. I can't speak definitively to this point because I have never nor will I ever hold the position of mother, but I'm going to go out on a limb and suggest that there is nothing normal about motherhood. Yours are unique challenges that come with the courage to continue on in the face of daunting obstacles and unparalleled expectations. Motherhood is not for the faint of heart.

Is there anything normal about being a mother?

Normal doesn't seem to square with the many responsibilities and challenges for those who hold such an esteemed office along the road of raising children. No matter how good your children may be, it is still no easy task. While there may be routine activities that are done regularly, like cooking, cleaning, laundry and shopping, there is nothing normal about being a mother, at least from my unscientific observation. Perhaps the only normal thing is that nothing is normal when it comes to being a mother.

I've not been privy to such conversations in the past, but I hear tell of such events where weary moms get together over a cup of coffee and a few ginger snaps. Conversation is often encouraging but never condescending. These weekly sessions are not unlike the war rooms where generals gather to discuss battle strategy. Moms hash over things like potty training and getting their child to clean their room without much of a fuss or curfew times for teens. They pass on the latest news about some new product or some idea that is supposed to be the next best thing since sliced bread.

As they share their experiences the others nod their head both in understanding and in agreement. Their eyes and hearts are not filled with pity as they listen

to the stories of exhaustion and exasperation of child rearing but rather their hearts all resonating in compassion and empathy for some of the turbulent events expressed by comrades in arms. While the experiences shared may not be exactly the same, they have had similar encounters with which others readily identify.

Perhaps you have had an experience like that of Mrs. Monroe who lives in Darlington, Maryland. She is the mother of 8 children and except for a few interesting experiences considered herself to be just like most mothers across America.

After spending an afternoon grocery shopping that would take all afternoon for 8 kids, she opened the door laden with bags of groceries. Everything looked pretty much the same, with the exception that it was a bit quieter than usual. Looking in the living room, five of her children were huddled in a small circle, exceedingly quiet, doing something with something in the middle of the circle from which her vision was shielded.

Putting down her bags of groceries in the kitchen she walked over to get a closer look at what was happening in the small circle and what she saw horrified her. They were playing with 5 of the cutest baby skunks you can imagine.

Instantly terrified she yelled at her children to run. Obedient as they were each child did exactly as they were told, scattering in five different directions, but not until after they had each scooped up a skunk. This only made their mother scream even louder and more frantically. It so scared the children that each one squeezed his skunk.

The author of the newspaper article written about the incident closed by noting this very important fact: skunks do not like to be squeezed.

As I said earlier, there is nothing normal about being a mother. Maybe you share a similar experience.

You might readily agree that with everything we put mothers through, they should automatically be bestowed with some great honor. They deserve a lot more credit than we give them.

For all they do and all we have put them through, no one deserves a special day all to herself more than Moms. (Now I won't ask by show of hands how many of you Moms will be cooking your own dinner.) [A cartoon showed a psychologist talking to his patient: "Let's see," he said, "You spend 50 percent of your energy on your job, 50 percent on your husband and 50 percent on your children. I think I see your problem."](#)

If you want a take away activity or application from the message today let me offer this. Go home today and write out 31 things your wife or mother does for you which you seldom thank her for. Then each day of the month compliment her for one of those attributes or activities. You might be surprised what else happens in the home after she gets up off the floor and questions who you are and what you did with her real family. You might just knock her socks off. It doesn't hurt to give a few compliments now and again. Make it a regular habit. (And Honey, I'm working on my list.)

If you are in the regular habit of buying gifts, let me offer some suggestions of things not recommended to buy her. But, ladies, you need to know just how stressful it can be for us men when it comes to gift buying. We have spent endless hours pacing up and down shopping mall aisles trying to pick out the right size, the right color, the right accent, the right gift. We nervously sweat over asking the clerk if she thinks you'll like it.

[Experts say you should never buy anything that plugs in, although one year \(for Christmas, Robyn wanted and got a Saws All... I love that gift.](#)

Don't buy clothes that involve sizes. You're bound to get it wrong. She may ask why you think she wears that size or tell you that she hasn't worn that size in 20 years. And never say that it looked good on the model.

[Avoid things that are useful. Just because it was advertised on TV as saving hundreds of hours will not win you any brownie points.](#)

[Jewelry is on the list as well. The jewelry your wife/mother wants you can't afford, and the jewelry you can afford, she doesn't want.](#)

[With that said, don't spend too much. She may wonder how you're going to afford it, but then again, don't spend too little, because she may ask you if that's all you think she is worth.](#)

Mothers are as unique as the flowers God has adorned the earth with. Both bring beauty and grace to any setting.

Their hugs mend broken hearts.

Their kisses cure skinned knees.

Their words comfort and encourage any failed attempt at kicking the winning goal, missing that one letter in the spelling bee competition or getting cut from the squad.

Their hearts absorb our pain.

Their hands carefully guide.

Their arms comfortingly hold.

Their lips compassionately speak.

With that said I'm all too keenly aware that for some motherhood was an accident, and not always a welcome one. Yet God has no accidents.

For others biological motherhood is not possible.

For still others, a mother was not always nice.

For some the road is not lined with roses but rather only thorns. It's a steep mountain or deep pit.

Some have the heartache of watching and praying for a wayward child.

Others have to fill the void of an absent husband who has left the family either mentally or physically. Joy and sorrow seem to run together. Many of us have only memories of our mothers who have left this life. It may have been a long time ago or it may be in recent memory. Those memories include a fading photograph or a letter written long ago. They may be the words of a song or the half empty bottle of perfume that sits on your dresser. Memories may be the favorite recipe you

now fix for special holiday meals or the dates on the calendar of some annual event you used to share.

Our hearts go out to you as we lift you up before the throne. Whatever your experience as a mother, you are to be commended and encouraged.

Now while we honor mothers today it is my desire that each of us be challenged in some way from our passage. Whether young or old, male or female, parent or not, this is a compelling passage from which to ponder our own spiritual walk of wisdom.

Please turn with me to **Proverbs 31:10-31**. This is such a wonderful passage in which to honor mothers, again keeping in mind that these are qualities that we should each aspire to embody. Notice three truths about this proverbial woman for which I would ask you to consider and pursue.

She is a valuable wife

She is a vigorous worker

She is a virtuous worker

I. SHE IS A VALUABLE WIFE – v. 10-12

If we were reading from the Hebrew text itself, you would notice that the characteristics outlined in this section begin with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. We might say then that it's the a-z of character traits embodied in the excellent wife. They are essential attributes of any godly person. As the last chapter of Proverbs, we could go so far to say that this one passage is the summation of the wisdom that has been taught throughout the book of Proverbs. As one author has noted, Proverbs teaches hard work, wise investments, good use of time, planning ahead, care for others, respect for one's spouse, sharing godly values with others, wise counsel, and godly fear – all characteristics of godliness. The message of wisdom is captured in these verses for us and personified in this excellent woman.

In these verses we see that she is both a treasured wife and she is a trusted wife.

A. She is a Treasured Wife – v. 10

The text begins with a mysterious but insightful question. **“Who can find a wife of noble character?”** **Is there such a person on the planet?** Sometimes you hear in the news the top 10 places in America to retire or the city somewhere in the

world with the longest life expectancy. Maybe there's a city somewhere that harbors women of godly character. **Is there such a place or such a person?** If so, it's the best kept secret in the world. The question does not imply that such a person does not exist, but rather as you read the context of the passage it means that when such a person is found, she should be admired, honored, and valued because of how rare and beautiful she is.

We see first of all that this person has noble character. It does not refer to someone who was born into royalty – that they have noble blood. The word literally means a person of strength and here refers to the distinct godly qualities that she displays in her character. Boaz describes Ruth as a woman of noble character (**Ruth 3:11**). **Proverbs 12:4** says that a wife with such noble character is a crown on the head of her husband meaning that she brings him honor and joy. Without such qualities she is like decay in his bones. **A friend of mine was married to a woman who was at times an embarrassment in public. Her actions brought him disgrace and sadness. You could see the great toll it took on him emotionally and physically.** The NLT says it best that such a wife **“saps his strength.”**

A wife who is not of noble character, one who is not morally strong brings him disgrace. This woman of noble character has taken God's measuring stick and set her sights on achieving His standard of being a woman of godly character. The godly qualities that she has clothed herself in are valuable. Her worth is of greater worth than that of the rarest and most precious jewels. **How much value do you place on your character? Are you a wife, a woman of noble character or do you sap the energy from your husband? For that matter for any of us, which attribute do we aspire to? Are we upright or unpleasant?**

She makes the right choices, even though the right choices are difficult to make. She has integrity, character, and sound moral principles. She is upright and honest. She is not willing to compromise her position when Biblical principles are in question. It may not be the popular position, but then again no one ever said it was easy making the right choices by living a godly life of integrity.

So I ask you, which person are you? Do you bring honor and strength to your family or do you bring dishonor and shame? Are you a person of integrity who stands in the strength of godly character or are you all too willing to go with the flow, bend a little on what Scripture says is right and wrong? This is a woman **“of noble character.”** Because of her integrity, she is both rare and precious.

She is a treasured wife.

She is also a trusted wife.

B. She is a Trusted Wife – v. 11-12

Because of her integrity her husband has complete trust in her. Trust is that quality of belief or confidence in the honesty, integrity and reliability in another person. This woman has lived such a life of virtue that he has complete confidence in her. He has entrusted everything he has to her care and watchful management. We see that in the example of Joseph. Potiphar explicitly trusted everything under the care of Joseph. He managed the entire household without concern from Potiphar.

That’s the kind of trust the husband has in his wife. She manages the household affairs in such a way that the husband has no worries about how their finances are being managed. She does so in such a way that her management enhances the wealth of the household and the passage notes that as a result of her careful management, he lacks nothing of value for their home.

Mom and Dad were married 53 years. In that time Dad only wrote two checks. One of them was when my brother and I were born and he had to pay the hospitable in order to discharge us. I’m sure there were some days he probably wished he hadn’t written that check. It’s not that he didn’t care about the finances or that Mom thought he was incompetent to pay the bills. Hers was a life of integrity so much so that Dad completely trusted her to handle the finances. He never had to worry that she was going to be frivolous or mismanage the money in some way.

Now notice her response in return. **“She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.”** NLT **“She will not hinder him but help him all her life.”**

Men, our complete trust in them elicits a response from them. They treat us well. It literally means that she helps advance us. She makes us look good. **From what this Proverb is telling us the saying is true that behind every good man is a good woman.** Our good, how we are seen by others is directly attributed to her. Ladies, you can make us look mighty good or mighty bad. Be careful how you portray your husband. A wife who is trusted by her husband will in turn support and encourage her husband in what he does. And she is faithful to this task all the days of her life. When we have put complete trust in her, every day she will do what she can to see we’re viewed by others in a positive light. She’ll encourage our work. **When I was uncertain about decisions regarding what I should do about work, it was Robyn who encouraged me to get back into pastoral ministry of some kind. That led me to hospice and then to here.** Such a wife of noble character is our main cheerleader. Her support pushes us to do better and to be better.

So here’s the question for all of us. Are we trustworthy? Do we encourage others in their tasks to do their best and to be their best?

That might be a good question to ask our family members.

A wife who is trusted and treasured is valuable. She is rare and priceless. Then she is a vigorous worker.

II. SHE IS A VIGOROUS WORKER – v. 13-27

She is an industrious worker.

A. She is an Industrious Worker – v. 13-19, 21-22

I don’t know about you but I’m exhausted just reading this list. Hers is an endless list of tasks she does. Never idle, she works vigorously to tend to the needs of others. Hers is a self-sacrificing love affair with her husband and her family to ensure their needs are met. She does not work to advance her own reputation. She doesn’t promote herself or seek the accolades of others. Hers are the hands of quiet but steady work.

Eager hands in **verse 16**, suggests that what she does brings joy and satisfaction to her labor. Tiring as they may be this is what she lives for. **When I**

got my High School Varsity jacket I well remember coming home so excited. Jacket in one hand and patches in the other I handed them to Mom so she could sew them on. Now this was no easy task. The sleeves were leather and the numbers were some really heavy material. The day I gave them to her just happened to be the day of a ladies retreat. She was a dorm hostess which meant she had to greet the ladies as they were getting their lodging assignments. But she took my jacket to camp with her and while she was greeting ladies coming into the dorm, she sewed my Varsity Jacket because she knew how important that was to me. Looking back thanks seem like such an inappropriate or lacking term of appreciation.

Up at 5 to get up to the camp kitchen by 6:30, she was the first to arrive to turn on ovens and start the day. The morning was busy cleaning up breakfast for 150 and getting ready for lunch. A short break came in the afternoon where she would go home, throw in a load of laundry, pay a few bills, write a letter to a friend and then return to the kitchen by 4:30 to begin dinner preparation. She would wrap up at camp around 7. Throughout the day, every day she would have a little chorus she would hum or sing. As I remember, it was never the same song two days in a row. She enjoyed her work as wife, mother, and camp cook. She is the epitome of what these verses convey about how vigorous she worked and how joyful was her heart each day.

This proverbial woman works well with her hands and then does her best to be a wise shopper. When the sale papers came out in the weekly paper, Mom would sit my brother down who was living at home during her illness and together she would make the grocery list out. She would compare coupons and sales between the grocery stores in Fairview and Mio. Then she would dig out her coupons so she could get the best deal. She was a wise shopper.

Our proverbial woman is always looking for the best value, stretching the dollar. Her shopping is careful and calculated. What she does is not a chore, nor an obligation to fulfill. It brings her delight and pleasure to see her family well cared for. **Verse 14** also implies that she wasn't stuck in a rut. That she sought out goods from faraway places not only speaks to her thriftiness to find the best

deal, but also says that she was enterprising. She was willing to try new things, to take some risk if she felt it was in the best interest of her family.

Knowing that the responsibilities are many, she rises early before everyone else in order to prepare for both her family and her servants. She doesn't make the servants fend for themselves. She, who has servants to take care of others, receives no assistance as she rises early to start her day.

The old adage is correct that says a man may work from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done.

She is not lazy.

As a matter of fact we see that from the profit she has made due to her thrifty savings, she buys a field and sacrificially plants and tends it. Vineyards require careful attention. You can't just throw some plants in the ground and expect them to produce a bumper crop of grapes. They require work pruning and cultivating. This woman is gifted with a business mind and a sense of enthusiastic energy about all she did. That verse 18 speaks of profitable trading means that she is planning for the future. Not only did she start her day early, but her day ends late in the night. When a passage speaks about a lamp going out, as it does in the story of the 10 virgins, it means that there is calamity. This woman didn't let her lamp go out so that her family would not meet disaster. She planned well for their care.

Cold weather was not a concern for her because she was prepared. Making winter clothes out of scarlet meant she spared no expense in making sure they were well taken care of in the winter months. *Her family is her greatest priority and her service to them was her greatest privilege.*

If it weren't enough for her to care for the needs of her family through being industrious, she was also a worker who was involved in others.

B. She is an Involved Worker – v. 20

Her eye was also on the needs of others. **Verse 20** states that she opened her arms up to the orphans and her hands to the needy. There was both compassion for their plight and a willingness in some way to serve them and then act accordingly.

But this did not come at the neglect of her family. They were her main priority and as if she didn't already have enough on her plate, she found time to assist the poor. It is often the nurturing care of a mother's heart that sees the plight of those in need and reaches out to assist. So ladies, don't nurture others to the neglect of your family. Find balance. I think that speaks to the trust the husband has placed in her.

The proverbial woman is a worker who is involved. She is also an inspirational worker.

C. She is an Inspirational Worker – v. 23-27

Because of the kind of woman she is, her husband is well respected in the city. Finding him at the city gate speaks to his position in the community. It wasn't just the spot to hang out and play checkers or talk about the latest news events. It was there that city leaders met to discuss business and to make judicial decisions. On account of her virtue and work ethic he is elevated to a place of respect in the community. She honors him rather than degrades him. She does not ridicule him in public, but offers support and encouragement. She respects him, because he himself is a person of respect. She brings harmony and unity to the home and to the community through her husband. She is the reason he can sit at the city gate.

She inspires quality work in what she does. **Verse 24** speaks about making sashes of linen. Merchants who traveled knew well where the best garments were made. Hers were of such superior quality that if one merchant didn't want to pay her price, someone else would.

But her inspiration didn't end at the gates of the city or among the traveling merchants. They ended where they began. She provided instruction to her children and servants at home so that they would grow to have godly character (v. 26).

When you consider all that she is and all that she does – that she is a valuable wife and that she is a vigorous worker, we end by noting a most important characteristic – she is a virtuous woman.

III. SHE IS A VIRTUOUS WOMAN – v. 28-31

She can win the Betty Crocker cook off or win the mother of the year, she may preside over the PTA, but above all else she is a godly woman.

Verses 28-30 tell us that her walk is spiritual.

A. Her Walk is Spiritual – v. 28-30

Proverbs ends where it began – the importance of fearing the Lord. She has a desire to follow God and obey Him, to observe His commands and honor Him through how she provides for her family. *She has a love for the Lord that submits to His will and commits to His Word.*

She finds time in her day to spend with the Lord so that His characteristics become hers. Such godliness is recognized by her family as they praise her for all she does and who she is, even though she seeks no recognition. Godly character is what drives her actions.

Her challenge to us today, whether a mother or not, is to become more godly in our character, to fear the Lord, to be obedient to His Word, to follow Him in all our ways. Her way is spiritual. **Is that what you are striving for?**

Finally, her work is spectacular.

B. Her Work is Spectacular – v. 31

With all her diligent work that she has inspired us with, she is then rewarded. It isn't just praise from her family; she is also recognized at the city gate. It was rare for a woman to receive such honor, but a wife who is valuable and a worker who is vigorous and a woman who is virtuous can't help but be noticed and praised by others. **Isn't great when we hear in the news a woman who is honored for the right reasons?**

Men, we need godly women beside us. Let's encourage them in that direction. **Do we appreciate our wives and mothers as we should? Do we tell them?**

For all of us today, do we strive to be virtuous in our conduct, do we strive to be vigorous in our work and do we strive to be valuable in character? Can we commit to being this kind of person?