

Spring Special 2024 #8

May 12, 2024

Stand Alone Message for Mothers' Day

Today's Message: The High Value of a Woman who Feels the Lord; Proverbs 31:30

If a soul rises upwards to God in deep awe and wonder, then the life of Christ, which indwells that soul, will flow out into the world leaving His mark wherever that person goes!

What does the world value most in a woman? Talent. Beauty. Charisma. Wealth. Success. Intelligence. Strength. Self-confidence. Sensuality.

What does God value most in a woman? There are several verses which give answers to this question. 1 Peter 3:1-6 provides several virtues which are of great value in God's eyes. Peter is speaking to believing, married women, but the spirit of these virtues should be emulated by Christian women, whether to woman is married or not married. Submission to her husband is first on the list. Obviously, that is directed toward married women. Peter is encouraging to the believing woman who has an unbelieving husband saying that she will minister most powerfully to her unbelieving husband through her quiet submissive behavior (3:1).

But the other virtues apply to all believing women and should be lived out in order to please God. Peter includes purity and reverence (3:2), the inward beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit (which is of great worth in God's sight (3:4)). And Peter adds, doing what is right without giving way to fear.

It takes godly humility and deep devotion to God to cultivate these qualities in your life. If you seek to be a woman who God highly esteems, consider the power of cultivating a humble spirit. God says in Isaiah 66:2b, "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at My word." Humility before God, the kind of humility that God loves, directs His grace toward you without hindrance. The word of God encourages every believer--and I want you women to hear this especially today—to "clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'" God will not resist a humble spirit!

So, while the world may not identify godly virtues, God loves them!

As we turn to Proverbs 31 today you may be thinking that this chapter contains the unobtainable life. I don't want you to think like that. I want you to see something. I want you to see that there is one essential virtue that is the mother of all virtues. And if you zero in on cultivating this one virtue, the others, which we have already mentioned, as well as all other virtues, will sprout and grow out of the rich soil of this *primary* virtue.

When you read Proverbs 31 you can't help but wonder, *how can one woman do all these things? How can one woman possess so many gifts?* In my opinion, this chapter isn't saying that if you are a woman of value that you will do all these things. But I do think it is saying that a woman whose heart is turned to the Lord, whose soul rises upwards to God, will spread the blessings of Christ to the world around. She will be like a river flowing from the throne of God bringing blessing to everyone with whom she has influence!

Today we will identify and define what is the primary, or foundational virtue you need to cultivate in your life as a believing woman. Second, the rest of us will learn why it is important to honor a godly woman who fears the Lord. And third, how will this virtue display itself in your life? (Thanks to John Piper and his notes.)

1) **What is this virtue and what does it mean?**

A) Proverbs 31:30 tells us that it is not *charm*, and it is not *beauty*. It is "fear of the Lord".

B) What does it mean to fear the Lord?

- 1) I always hear John Piper's teaching on this. He recalls Exodus 20:18-20. In those verses we learn that while the thundering and lightnings were booming from the mountain, the people were

afraid and begged Moses to not let God speak directly to them. They said, “You speak to us and we will hear, but let not God speak to us, lest we die.” And Moses said to them, “*Do not be afraid*, for God has come to test you so that the *fear of God* will be with you to keep you from sinning.”

- (a) They were afraid of God and tempted to hide and avoid coming hearing and coming to Him.
- (b) Moses wanted them to keep God before them in such a reverent way that instead of running from this powerful God who is opposed to sin, that they would draw near Him seeking mercy.
 - (i) We often wrongfully afraid of God and instead of reverencing Him we run from Him. But we are to reverence God and fear “kindling God’s powerful wrath against sin” and turn to Him for help and aid and mercy—out of reverence and love for God!
- (c) Proper fear of the Lord rightly understands that there is:
 - (i) No hiding from Him
 - (ii) Safety in coming to Him. He is our refuge even though we often fail Him and always fall short of His glory.
 - (a) Psalm 31:19 says, “Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up *for those who fear you* and worked for those who take refuge in you...”

2) How does rightly fearing (reverencing) God affect your life?

- (a) Psalm 43:7: “The Angel of the Lord encamps around those who *fear* Him and delivers them.”
- (b) Psalm 103:11: “As the heavens are high above the earth so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him.” (Remember, this *fear* causes us to come near to Him, not run away.)

C) A godly “woman who fears the Lord will not run away from God to satisfy her longings and relieve her anxieties. She will wait for the Lord. She will hope in God. She will stay close to the heart of God and trust His promises.” (John Piper)

1) He goes on, “The prospect of departing in the way of sin will be too fearful to pursue; and the benefits of abiding in the shadow of the Almighty too glorious to forsake.”

- (a) It is this woman, the woman who *rightly fears (reverences) the Lord* who is most esteemed.

II) Why it is important to honor a woman who fears the Lord.

A) God’s word commands us to honor such a woman.

- 1) It is for her encouragement. It should be an encouragement to the whole church body as well! It says to her and to all who hear, “Do more of that!”
 - (a) Honoring a woman who fears the Lord, serves to teach the whole church what *fear of the Lord* looks like. It has a powerful effect on the young women and even young girls.
- 2) The Lord delights in those who *fear* Him and so should we also delight ourselves in her virtue!
 - (a) Psalm 34:4, “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.”

B) Praising, or honoring a God-fearing woman honors God!

- 1) If someone praises the behavior of one of your children, you as a parent feel honored.
- 2) When we praise someone for their godly conduct, it honors God, from whom all power and blessings flow!
 - (a) God graces His people with power to do His will, so praising the person for their godly conduct is ultimately praise to God, the giver of true godliness!

C) Repeat point A). It encourages her **now**. It builds her faith and trust in God **now**.

- 1) There is a high probability that the woman who displays the fear of God is most humble and is carrying many heavy burdens; probably more than you'll ever know.
 - (a) It is also probable that when your honor such a virtuous woman that she will be strengthened in the Lord and persevere through the trials.
 - 2) "Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:" (Prov. 31:28)
- III) **What are the marks that identify a woman who fears the Lord.** (Order of content is from John Piper.)
- A) She has no concern over future troubles.
 - 1) Proverbs 31:25: "She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come."
 - (a) This is not an easily learned behavior. For, every day, the wicked one assaults women with the taunts of *tomorrow's troubles*.
 - (i) If *fear of trouble* or *fear of the innumerable possibilities of trouble* takes hold a woman melts into **the sin of not fearing God!**
 - (ii) But, if for even a moment she looks to God, and turns her heart toward Him, trusting His promises—God who is at her right hand!—she can laugh at Satan's taunts!
 - (a) When you look to God who is at your right hand, you walk in His power!
 1. Prov. 14:26: "In the fear of the Lord a person has strong confidence, and his children have a refuge!"
 - (iii) In the moments of failing, however, she does not run away from God, but **instead, she runs to God seeking mercy and help!** (Hebrews 4:16)
 - B) She has wisdom for all seasons. "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Prov. 9:10)
 - 1) Proverbs 31:26 tells us that the fear of the Lord makes her words wise! "She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue."
 - (a) The world needs the wisdom of a God-fearing woman! It is she who hopes in the Lord!
 - (b) But if you have failed in this, don't run from God! Run to Him right now! "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault! (James 1:5)"
 - C) She is strong and clothed with dignity.
 - 1) Proverbs 31:25a, "She is clothed with strength and dignity."
 - (a) This strength and dignity is a moral strength and dignity. It is characteristic of God-fearing women. Proverbs 23:17 says about this: "Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day."
 - (i) Continuing in the *fear of the Lord* will strengthen such a woman to resist strong temptations, especially the enticement to desire what you shouldn't have. (Piper)
 - D) She will live a sacrificial life of love for others.
 - 1) Proverbs 31:10-28 is a picture of the broad spectrum of influence a woman who primarily purposes to fear the Lord.
 - (a) That is, her heart is aflame for God. And the life of Christ in her has far reaching influence.
 - E) The story concerning my mom's influence in the life of James at Eastlake Woods Apartments
 - 1) She never told me this story.
 - 2) But if she were still here with us, I could say, such a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.