

S.N. May 9, 71 A.M. Mother Day

A PORTRAIT OF THE MOTHER OF THE YEAR

Proverbs 31

INTRODUCTION

More than a thousand times a day somewhere in the United States, a judge's gavel falls and with two words, "Divorce granted," somebody's love story comes to an end. The need is tremendous, and since today is Mother's Day I want to bring a message especially for you mothers. My talk may not be flowery, I do not have any poetry to quote to you, and really it is not my purpose to idealize motherhood. I believe we get enough of that on (television) where it states, "It would be nice if mothers could smile when little boys tramp mud across freshly waxed kitchen floors." But the finest Christian mothers I know get a little bit irritated about this sort of thing. And the mothers I know today, the greatest problem is (not) the family brand of toothpaste nor the kind of aspirin.

And of course I can't say that if you will take two or three sample scriptures then that will make you an ideal mother, and you will be able to be smiling and composed, and that your children will turn out to be great Christians, and hold prominent places, and that they will rise up and call you blessed.

We must be practical. Motherhood has never been easy, and it may, too, today, have many more frustrations with it. But in the beginning let me say that I do not have all of the answers.

But I have one purpose in mind I want to encourage mothers because most of them know how to do a pretty good job. Now there are a few who are flitting around letting maids rear their children, but by large most mothers are conscientious and concerned about their children's health, their grades, and their future.

However, there are some mothers whose job is increasing day by day. I know that most of you read about the story that happened in Kansas on Tuesday with an instant family of 25 being merged together in wedding vows. (David Hund,) a dairy farmer and the father of 11 children married Patricia Ebert, mother of 12, and they established a family of 25 persons. All the 23 children were in the wedding party. Some were ushers and so forth and so on. They all plan to live on his farm, on the dairy farm in Kansas.

That reminds me of a lady who came to Mr. Moody once and insisted that God had called her to preach the gospel. Mr. Moody replied that he thought that it was wonderful that she was able to discern God's will. Then he asked her about her family at home. She replied that she had a husband and 11 children. Mr. Moody exclaimed, "Then thank the dear Lord, madam, for He has not only called you to preach, but He has already given you a congregation."

Now, dear devoted mothers need not fear that their lives be wasted when they are spent upon the home. Now, I am sure that Mrs. Patricia Hund has already a congregation to preach and to teach.

There are certain limitations which I feel keenly about bringing this message this morning. First of all, I am a man, and I know that no man can ever fully fathom a mother's frustrations and anxieties. Now, I did get a little experience recently in the mechanics of motherhood that did give me a new appreciation of some of the difficulties of this vocation. My wife was in the hospital for a few days, and I ran the house. I found out how fantastically quickly dirty dishes can stack up and clothes hampers can overflow and how rapidly meals can come around. Now, of course meals are not so difficult if you have cookies and milk for breakfast and for lunch and for supper. But in hunting around in the grocery store, I looked around on shelves to

see if I couldn't find something quicker than instant potatoes. But getting a first-hand knowledge of washing, ironing, cooking, and so on, no man can really comprehend the meaning of motherhood, and I really apologize for my limitation at this point.

There are many problems. It is such a wide area that motherhood encompasses in the major part of her life. The responsibilities to children when they are little, to teenagers as they develop, and yet a mother keeps being mother while the child goes to high school, when he goes off to college, when he goes away in the service, when he gets married and has his own family. In a way motherhood is forever. It's a job you never really get finished, and you never complete.

You know I like that picture, Whistler's portrait of his mother. It's a wonderful picture. It may be a little old-fashioned for some today in many respects when you think about the dress. But really, the fundamental qualities of womanhood and her love for the family change very little with the one generation after another. There are certain eternal qualities that remain.

That's why I have chosen a few verses here out of the 31st chapter of Proverbs. Now these words are the words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. Now, this tells us something, but it doesn't tell us everything. Now the word Lemuel means "unto God" or "dedicated to God." Now, it seems that this king gives this exhortation as follows: the mother of a king was always held in high esteem. In fact, she was perhaps higher than the king's wife, because she had to do with raising this boy to manhood and giving him the proper guidance and instilling in his life the important things that were necessary to make life worthwhile. And so Lemuel, the king, gives this prophecy about mother, and there are three things I think we will have time to note here.

I. A Divine Office

The first thing we notice about this woman is that she is a good wife, a true companion, a real good partner of her husband.

Verses 10 through 12. "Who can find a virtuous woman, for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her so that he shall have no need of spoil." And of course, we discover that her husband praiseth her, that he knows that many women have done excellent, but you surpass them all, he says. Now, this is a wonderful portrait of the business of a mother. She carries on a variety of work at home and industry. She produces the goods that they need, she purchases a field and plants a vineyard. It reads like teamwork between husband and wife, in his business, in the family, she is right at his side.

She uses good sense in spending the earnings of the family's income. Now this is where many problems develop, because some women have no estimate as to the worth of a dollar, or how to use the family income in a way in which it will count most. But (Lemuel) said that this woman was excellent in this way.

Now, there is nothing more basic here to the Christian welfare of the home, the welfare of the children, their mutual love and trust on the part of the husband and the wife. It seems to be a sheer joy to be in each other's presence. It was a wonderful experience she held a divine office.

I read about a country girl once who married a boy from the city. After some months she wrote home to report to her mother. "At last I have everything I have wanted. I have enough money to buy all the clothes I can wear, I have my own car, I travel widely, I go to all the shows and concerts that my schedule allows, there is only one thing wrong. I hate my husband."

How true that is of many couples, where they actually hate each other, and there is a coolness and indifference, and the one thing that counts the most is honest to goodness love for each other. For Proverbs 15:17 says, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it."

A French artist in the 19th century and a master of the social life put on lithograph a man plumped up on a davenport. His eyes were closed, one arm was dangling toward the floor. On an easy chair beside him his wife is stretched out. Her arms are folded, her eyes are closed. On the mouth of each is an unconcealed yawn. He entitled the picture, "Six months of marriage." How often ~~xxx~~ we allow the romance, the glow to depart, maybe not after six months, but may be six years, or 26 years, we do not know.

There is an old Jewish saying, "God could not be everywhere, and therefore he made mothers." There is no need to multiply Bible verses to prove that mothers hold a divine office. The very fact that she can exercise influence in the shaping of a life of human beings is proof enough.

Every mother should look at her role, something of the way that Hannah, the mother of Samuel, looked upon it. Listen to her words: "For this child hath I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition, which I asked of Him. Therefore, also I have lent him to the Lord-as long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord." I Samuel 1:27-28.

Motherhood is a stewardship of responsibility before God. It is perhaps the highest. We are accountable to God for what we do with our time and our money, and I think mothers are responsible to God as to what they make of their own lives and how they shape the lives of children. This is a divine task, and the portrait in Proverbs that a woman is pictured, she has a knack for getting things done, for helping her husband,

for blessing her children, they all will come forth and praise her. So she has a divine office.

II. She is a homemaker

Now, this is a tough task of a devoted homemaker and mother.

V. (27) - "She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness."

V. (21) - "She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet."

V. (26) - "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue."

V. (28) - "Her children rise up and call her blessed."

The work of rearing a family is getting easier. Now some may disagree, but my grandmother was a wonderful woman, used to have to make soap in a big iron pot. Doing the washing was an all-day job. She had to get up at 4:00 in the morning to cook hot biscuits and bacon and eggs.

Dishwashers, clothes dryers, and electric can openers are making a woman's work easier.

Instant coffee, instant oatmeal, and T.V. dinners are lightening the work load even more.

In the future, I understand, women are going to be able to shop by television.

Now, the work is getting easier, but I think here is a point, the worries are getting greater. Preparing children for our increasingly competitive society is a monumental task. School work from the first grade on.

Dr. Joyce Brothers quotes some alarming statistics - for every 10,000 students, 1,000 will have emotional conflicts of sufficient severity to warrant professional help. Three to four hundred will have feelings of depression severe enough to impair their efficiency; 15 to 20 will become ill enough to be treated in a mental hospital; 5 to 20 of this 10,000 will attempt suicide.

But in our society there is no place for dropouts. There are fewer and fewer places for under-achievers. Now this becomes a legitimate worry for the conscientious mother.

What is happening in the moral sphere is a just cause for concern. N.B.C. presented an hour-long special program on pleasure-seeking some time ago. Now, if the modern trend ~~merited~~ merited such a program in the so-called moral revolution, then there is something to worry about.

Young people today are listening to such men as Thomas Leary and others who are prophets of the future, and they propose in the foremost the use of L.S.D. He is telling young people that they should throw off the shackles of the old morality to write for themselves a new 10 commandments.

Now, it is hard for me to understand and imagine that such folks are often invited to address the impressionable students at our universities, but different schools stand for different things. Guiding young people through college, through high school and college in the prevailing moral climate is enough to turn any mother prematurely gray. Her task of homemaking is a difficult task, and it takes love.

Four-year old Johnny came running in one day with a little chick. He had apparently taken it from a neighbor's brooder where they had some chickens. And his ~~xxx~~ mother told him, "Take the chick back to its mother." "Well, it ain't got no mother," Johnny replied. Then ~~xxx~~ the daddy spoke up and said, "Take it back to its father, then." Johnny protested, "It hasn't got a father either. It hasn't got anything but an old lamp."

Now, an electric lamp may serve the physical purpose of a little chick. It may hatch the egg, it may preserve the chick until it is old enough and strong enough to go out and forge for itself, but the tragedy is that some fathers and mothers are like that. They give the child a warm bed, a nourishing meal, adequate clothing and shelter, but they fail to give the love and the affection which is portrayed here in the book of Proverbs.

A woman who cares can make even the most menial home, household chore almost a sacrament. She can even turn dishwashing, mending, settling disputes with meaning and joy. Everything she does becomes an expression of love for her children and devotion to her husband. It is all a matter of the spirit in which the task of homemaking is undertaken. It is a great blessing when ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ a woman makes motherhood and homemaking such a wonderful experience. Children will not escape this feeling, this wonderful experience which they have had in their home.

And children will enjoy the matter of coming home and of feeling this warmth.

On a cemetary headstone, below the name and the date of the deceased, is this simple phrase, "She made home happy."

There was no other word, for no other word was needed. No more eloquent testimony could be written for this good wife and mother than that she made home a happy place to live.

The great answer and object of motherhood is here in V. 27. "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." No mother can be lazy and achieve and make home what it ought to be. Now, over-protection is not the answer, nor is over-leniency.

Many young people who have moral problems will say, "My parents have not been strict enough." And once in a while you will find someone who will say, "My parents were too strict." There is no simple answer to a guaranteed procedure here. But what a mother is trying to do is two-fold - to help the child stand alone, and second, to become his best self.

When children are a few months old, they begin to walk. Mothers know that at first they need a hand to hold on, or they need some furniture to lean on. Every child will take a few tumbles in learning to walk, but ultimately, all support must be taken away, and the youngster must learn to stand alone, and to walk.

The same is true in the emotional and spiritual life of a child. In the early years they need a lot of support, but gradually through the years they must learn to stand alone and walk by something within them that guides them. They must make their way in a competitive society.

Now, this letting go process seems to be one of the hardest things that motherhood involves. During the adolescent years, there will be some inevitable conflicts: Most teenagers become rebellious toward their parents, rebellious toward

the institutions. It is one of the stages of development. They are caught in an experience between childhood and adulthood. They are trying to get from one to the other. Now, the period of rebellion would be much easier for many mothers to take if they could understand that it is comparable to the desperate struggle that the butterfly makes in breaking loose from the cocoon.

The "letting go" process continues until the offspring becomes married or of marriageable age. And then the mother has a grown daughter, the father has a grown son, and they are more closely friends than anything else. Nothing ~~xxxxxx~~ strains the relationship between the parent and a grown child so much as for the parents to continue to treat him like a child.

✓ III. She has a firm faith.

I think this is a third quality we find here in the Proverbs. She has a divine office, and she has a tough job as a homemaker. Now, in the final moments, I want to speak with you about the faith she has. Her religious faith.

V. 17 - "She girds her loins with strength, and makes her arms strong."

V. 25 - "Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come."

V. 20 - "She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hand to the needy."

V. 30 - "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised."

Faith with spiritual resources from within sustains this mother according to Lemuel, in her daily tasks, in her outgoing interests, it was expressed in the family circle. Now there is no simple formula for motherhood, but these verses here come nearer to challenging mothers to come back to the Bible. "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will no depart from it." Take your children to Sunday School and to church as long as they live in your house. Dropping your children off at Sunday School and picking them up before church is one of the worst habits you can teach them.

Make the home in which your children grow up as happy and as Christian as possible.

There will perhaps be some cross words, some strained relationships, but show your children what it means for a man and woman to love each other. Try to lead your children to love the Bible, and to take Jesus seriously.

Help them to discover themselves and to become what God wants them to be.

Don't try to press them into a mold. Help them to discover the joys and the thrills of everyday life.

Pray for your children and trust in the truth of the promise.

Remember, that the principle stated here is not a money-back guarantee. Some children have been raised right, but they disappoint both their parents and God, for children are free moral agents, and they can choose for themselves the kind of lives that they will live. But it is remarkable how many fine Christian men and women there are who have been produced by the right kind of mothers and fathers.

The mother of the year, 1970, was Mrs. Dorothy Wilson of Memphis, Tennessee. She was chosen by the American Mother's Committee, and she is the mother of five children. She said that children should be taught at a very early age to love and respect the church, the law, and the home. Sometimes parents wake up and find it is too late. They just didn't start their training soon enough. Perhaps better police forces, more recreation, and better supervision are needed in our cities; yet these cannot atone for the harm done by parents who are too lazy, too indifferent, or just too busy to devote time to their ~~and~~ children.

She emphasizes the maintenance of Christian homes filled with love and security, and where the Bible is read.

She has a firm belief in that parents should accompany their children to church, not just send them. She is a member of the Methodist church, and all of her children have followed Christ, and she has guided them all through college. She said, "We have taught the children, 'God put you here for a reason - to make the world, or at least your corner of it - a better place. What counts is not what you will take out of it, but you will put in it.'" That certainly is a tremendous statement by a mother.

I read the story of an (old-fashioned children's day program) and a little girl was about to speak a piece. She got in front of the crowd, and the sight of so many people who were curious, and it just threw her into a panic. Every line she had rehearsed so carefully ~~fast~~ faded from her mind. There frozen in her tracks, unable to utter a single syllable. In the front row her mother was almost frantic as her little girl could not recall a word. The mother gestured, she screwed up her lips as though to form the words to be spoken, but to no avail. Finally, in desperation she whispered

the opening words, "I am the light of the world." Instantly the child's face relaxed, a smile appeared where there had been clouds before. With such supreme confidence she began, "My mother is the light of the world." Of course, everybody smiled, and some laughed aloud. But then they soberly reflected that the girl in some way was not far wrong.

For good or ill, mothers are the light of their children's world. It is from them that children get their understanding and awareness of God, their devotion to Him, their acquaintance with prayer, their sense of a proper relation to those about them. In them the light of the world is there. Now, Jesus said in others how great is the darkness. The wise mother is not content with just being a good homemaker for her children. She looks to her example.

"We take the silver out and polish it
 With all the zeal that we can muster.
But leave religion on the shelf
 Expecting it to hold its luster."

Ivey Thornson.

Ivey Thornson knew the truth that it pays to heed the spiritual nurture of children enlisting them in the church, seeking to help them by books and journals to be Christian homemakers. She not only makes home happy, but she makes it a place of Christian growth.

V. 28 - "Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also and he praiseth her."

And that 31st verse - "Give her of the fruit of her hands." I hope that such use of this will not give you the impression that a mother receives her rewards

when she enters the pearly gates, or at death. We must not wait until a mother is gone to express such feelings as Lemuel here expressed. There is no reason why we should not give expression of our feelings of love and appreciation while we can. And there is no reason why son or daughter should be silent. As the old Vermonter sat one day on his porch at the farm house whittling. His wife sat beside him rocking and knitting. And he said, "You know Sarah, you have meant so much to me that some-
times it is almost more than I can stand not to tell you about it." There is no reason why the husband should be put under such strain trying to hold it in. Certainly above all else, we can speak up and give thanks to God for the blessing of a Christian home.