

## MOTHER'S DAY

### "THE MEASURE OF THE PERFECT MOTHER"

#### PROVERBS 31:10-31

### This Week's Core Competency

**Kindness/Goodness** – I choose to do the right things in my relationships to others. 1 Thessalonians 5:15 *Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.*

"Your mother carried you in her womb for nine months, during which she was constantly concerned for your safety. Even in your infancy your mother kept you warm, fed, and bathed you. She protected you from diseases and dangers. She sang to you, called you sweet names, and gazed on you with loving eyes. Throughout your childhood your mother couldn't be separated from you even for a single moment. If she was separated from you, it was as if part of her own heart had been taken from her. Her every concern was for your well-being: What were you doing? Were you okay? You were never far from her thoughts even when you were physically separated. If you grew even slightly ill, she became alarmed and called doctors. She said prayers for you and worried that you wouldn't be as successful as the other kids. She was always concerned for you. She often went without sleep at night and worked until her bones grew tired, but this she was willing to do. For your sake your mother denied herself food and clothing when necessary, and passed up luxuries and comforts for

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*He who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness gathers love.*

– St. Basil

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herself that you might have them. The things that she thought too good for herself, or wasted on others, were all right for you. Your life and your advantage, your comfort, happiness, and well-being were of more concern to her than her own. How can you forget such kindness?" ("Meditation on Mother's Kindness," abbreviated).

### How Do We Repay Our Mother's Kindness?

Posted on **May 12, 2012** by **CommonKindness**

"Everywhere we go, we are bombarded with advertising about the importance of showing gratitude to our mothers on their special day with material gifts ranging from greeting cards to diamond jewelry. The message is clear—we should feel bad if we don't buy something for mom.

As a mom, the gift I want most from my daughter is much more simple, free and intangible. Reading me a poem, singing a song, serving me breakfast in bed, making me a home-made card, or just spending the day with me doing things I like is all it takes to warm my heart. The love is not in the gift, it's in the thoughtfulness and care that my child puts into her gesture of gratitude that matters. I think we underrate how much impact acts of kindness have on our mothers, but it's the best way to show we love them.

I am not sure a mother's kindness can ever be fully repaid. Perhaps that is all the more reason to adopt a practice and make a habit of reciprocated kindness. I say don't feel obligated to spend a lot of money on a gift for Mother's Day. Spend time and energy showing you care. All she really wants is to know she is appreciated.

Kindness is priceless . . . just like our moms."

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## For Discussion

List three or four of the virtues of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:10-31. Talk about the virtue that reminds you most of your own mother.

# day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

## Proverbs 31:10-31

10A wife of noble character who can find?

She is worth far more than rubies.

11Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.

12She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.

13She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.

14She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.

15She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls.

16She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

17She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.

18She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.

19In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.

20She opens her arms to the poor

and extends her hands to the needy.

21When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.

22She makes coverings for her bed;

she is clothed in fine linen and purple.

23Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.

24She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.

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

26She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

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

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

29"Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all."

30Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

31Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

\* In the margin next to v. 10 write "A," next to 11 "B," next to 12 "C" and so on through v. 31 indicating this is an acrostic poem—each line begins with a word the first letter of which is a successive letter in the Hebrew alphabet (cf. Ps 119).

\* Bracket vv. 19, 20. And draw a line from the word "hand" in v. 19 to "hands" in v. 20; then cross out the word "fingers" in v. 19 and "arms" in v. 20 and near each write the word "palms" indicating *chiasm* (a, b / b, a) in vv. 19, 20.

\* Highlight the *rhetorical* question in v. 10.

\* Circle "find" in v. 10.

\* In the margin next to v. 10b, write, "Cf. Pr 3:15 and 8:11."

\* Draw a line between "husband" in v. 11 and v. 23; "merchant/s" in v. 14 and v. 24; "buys" in v. 16 and

"sells" in v. 24; "vigorously" in v. 17 and "idleness" in v. 27 indicating *repeated* ideas in vv. 10-18 and 21-29.

\* Box "like" indicating *comparison* in v. 14.

\* Underline the first line in v. 15 and the second line in v. 18.

\* Circle the obscure words "distaff" and "spindle" in v. 19.

\* Circle "scarlet" and "purple" i.e., rich apparel in vv. 21, 22.

\* Bracket "clothed with strength and dignity" in v. 25.

\* Underline the prepositional phrase "bread of idleness" in v. 27.

\* Circle the word "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 29, 30.

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## day 2

## EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Rewrite the *rhetorical* question in v. 10 as a *declarative* statement.
2. Describe the relationship the "wife of noble character" has with her husband.
3. Identify verses in the rest of the poem that echo the sentiment of verse 13.
4. Explain the *comparison* in verse 14.
5. Put the combined meaning of the first line in verse 15 and the last line in verse 18 in your own words.
6. What do you infer about the woman from verse 16?
7. What does the "body language" of verse 20 indicate to you?
8. This woman does a lot of different things. Do you think it's reasonable to believe that she does them all everyday? Explain.
9. Some interpret the "wife of noble character" to be wisdom *personified* rather than a literal woman. "She [Wisdom] was presented in chapter 9 as the young marriageable woman seeking lovers who would accept the gifts and life she could offer. Now that time of courtship, of learning, is over. In chapter 31 Wisdom is a faithful wife and a skilled mistress of her household, finally settled with her own" (Murphy, 250). What do you think of this view?
10. Explain the point of the *contrast* in verse 30.
11. **Discussion:** Talk about whether the poem is about a literal woman or Wisdom personified.

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## day 3

# EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The "wife of noble character" sounds too good to be true. She's devoted to her husband's welfare, eager, industrious, entrepreneurial, charitable, and talented, a good manager, a good planner, and a good teacher, to mention but a few of her virtues. No wonder some believe the poem in Proverbs 31:10-31 contains "an idealized portrait of a wise wife in an ideal household in an ideal society" (C. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine*, BLS11, 92). One writer says outright, "The description of the woman is not truly real; no one can perform all that she does" (Roland E. Murphy, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 22, *Proverbs*, 249). If that's the case, what's the point of the poem?

Some regard it as instruction for young women contemplating marriage, which they believe accounts for its description of the ideal wife. Others take the woman to be the personification of wisdom based on the similarities between the "wife" and wisdom in the book of Proverbs. For example, both are more precious than rubies (31:10; cf. 3:15; 8:11), both have a house (31:27; cf. 8:34; 9:1), both have servant girls (31:15; cf. 9:3); both prosper those who love them (31:12, 15, 21; cf. 8:18; 9:12), and both are teachers (31:26; cf. 8:6-11; 9:4-12). An examination of wisdom as portrayed in chapter 9 and the "wife" as portrayed in chapter 31 leads to the following comparison: "If Wisdom is inviting guests to her home in chap. 9, the portrait in chap. 31 symbolizes Wisdom finally settled down with her own" (250). So, is the poem an idealized description of a wise wife or a description of wisdom personified? Maybe this is a literary example of "both/and" rather than "either/or." Consider this. If the poem describes wisdom's blessings on a household, which in all likelihood it does, wisdom can only be present in a household to the extent that its members choose to embrace her and behave wisely. The ideal home will contain a "wife of noble character" as well as a husband "of noble character." The poem focuses on the wife rather than the husband because it personifies wisdom, which is portrayed as the virtuous woman

wisdom in contrast to the adulterous woman folly in earlier chapters (cf. 7:1-27; 9:1-18). In any case, women shouldn't read it in a legalistic way; it wasn't written to hold them to some impossible standard. It wasn't written to depress them, to make them feel hopelessly guilty. After all, what this woman does she does over the course of her life not any one season of her life. It makes its point in verses 30 and 31. "A woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate."

Verse 23 marks the center of the poem and establishes its central message: "this woman is the kind of wife a man needs in order to be successful in life" (Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 248). A number of her virtues are extolled in verses 11-21. She is a rare find and blessing to her husband (vv. 10-12). She is industrious (vv. 13-19). She is generous (v. 20). She is prudent and elegant (vv. 21a-22). The same virtues are then extolled in verses 24-29 in reverse order (on the chiasmic structure of the poem see Garrett, 248). She is prudent and elegant (vv. 24-25b). She is generous (v. 26). She is industrious (v. 27). Her children call her blessed and her husband publically praises her worth (vv. 28-31). One commentator summarizes the poem this way: "The good wife described here has every virtue wisdom can offer. She is diligent, has a keen sense for business matters, is compassionate, is prepared for the future, is a good teacher, is dedicated to her family, and above all else possesses the primary characteristic of biblical wisdom, the fear of the Lord (looking back to Prov 1:7, the theme of the book). She is no less than Woman Wisdom made real. The riches Woman Wisdom offers (8:18) are brought home by the hard work of the good wife (31:11). Proverbs has, in effect, come full circle. It began by saying that the young man must embrace the imaginary ideal of Woman Wisdom in order to have a fulfilling life, and it ends by saying that one needs a good wife to achieve this goal" (252)

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*The Message of the Passage*  
*Honor the woman of noble character for she is worth far*  
*more than rubies; if you make her your spouse,*  
*she will bless you all the days of your life.*

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

**“The Measure of the Perfect Mother”**  
(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

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# notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

## On the poem's structure

"The poem is skillfully crafted. It is both *acrostic* (each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet) and *chiastic* in structure. Either one of these is sufficient evidence of the poet's skill; the integration of the two is astounding. The chiasmus is as follows . . ." (Garrett, 248).

## On the poem's interpretation

"The book of Proverbs comes to a close with this poem about the noble wife. A careful reading of the poem will show that it is extolling godly wisdom that is beneficial to the family and the society. Traditionally it has been interpreted as a paradigm for godly women. And while that is valid in part, there is much more here. The poem captures all the themes of wisdom that have been presented in the book and arranges them in this portrait of the ideal woman (Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, 92-93). Any careful reading of the passage would have to conclude that if it were merely a paradigm for women what it portrays may well be out of reach—she is a wealthy aristocrat who runs an estate with servants and conducts business affairs of real estate, vineyards, and merchandising, and also takes care of domestic matters and is involved with charity. Moreover, it says nothing about the woman's personal relationship with her husband, her intellectual and emotional strengths, or her religious activities (E. Jacob, 'Sagesse et Alphabet: Pr. 31:10-31,' *Hommages a A. Dont-Sommer*, 287-95). In general, it appears that the 'woman' of Proverbs 31 is a symbol of all that wisdom represents. . . . Several features will stand out in the study of this passage. First, it is an alphabetic arrangement of the virtues of wisdom (an acrostic poem). Such an acrostic was a way of organizing the thoughts and making them more memorable (M. H. Lichtenstein, 'Chiasm and Symmetry in Proverbs 31,' *CBQ* 44 [1982]: 202-11). Second, the passage is similar to hymns, but this one extols wisdom. A comparison with Psalm 111 will illustrate the similarities. Third, the passage has similarities with heroic literature. The vocabulary and the expressions often sound more like an ode to a champion than to a domestic scene. Putting these features together, one would conclude that Proverbs 31:10-31 is a hymn to Lady Wisdom, written in the heroic mode . . . The poem certainly presents a pattern for women to follow. But it also presents a pattern for men to follow as well, for this is the message of the book of Proverbs in summary" (the NET Bible, 23<sup>sn</sup> on Pr 31:10-31).

### v. 10 **noble character**

Lit., "woman of valor," used of the Moabitess in Ruth 3:11 "Here the title indicates that the woman possesses all the virtues, honor, and strength to do the things that the poem will set forth. Older translations," the KJV for example, "used the word 'virtuous'" (The NET Bible, Pr 31:10, **n26**; cf. "capable" NRSV, TEV).

### v. 10 **find**

Sometimes the English word connotes a casual finding, e.g., "I found a dollar in the parking lot." The Hebrew verb here connotes intentional finding.

### v. 10 **worth**

Lit., "her price." Wisdom is described in similar terms in 3:13-18 and 8:11.

### v. 19 **distaff, spindle**

While these words occur here only, they clearly refer to spinning and weaving.

### v. 20 **arms**

Lit., "palms." "Opens her palms" and "extends her hands" (*synonymous parallelism*) denotes giving to the poor and needy, i.e., charity.

### v. 21 **scarlet**

Or perhaps "double garments" (cf. TEV, "warm clothing"). "The consonants allow the reading double (AVMG), i.e., double thickness, which is supported by Vulg. and LXX (the latter joining it to the next verse)" (Derek Kidner, *The Proverbs*, TOTC, 184). References to "scarlet," "fine linen," and "purple" imply that members of her household were well dressed implying that they were prosperous.

### v. 23 **city gate**

Business was transacted, affairs were settled, and the news of the community was circulated at the city gates. Her husband's position as a respected leader in the community was in no small part due to his wife's "noble character" (v. 10).

### v. 23 **elders**

"Takes his seat among the elders" implies he is one of them—a leader (perhaps a city councilman) in the community. The NET Bible refers to him as "a judge among the people" (see Pr 31:23 note 55).

### v. 25 **clothed**

The opposite is to be "clothed with shame and disgrace" (Ps 35:26). To be "clothed" with something is to display it in abundance, to be "covered" with it. "The metaphor of being clothed with an abstraction is very biblical: justice, Ps 132:9; joy, Ps 30:11; cf. also Ps 104:1" (Murphy, 248).

### v. 26 **wisdom**

Nowhere in the poem does the "wife of noble character" come closer to being the personification of wisdom than in this verse (cf. 1:20-33; 8:1-9:18).

### v. 27 **of idleness**

The figurative expression refers to "bread baked by someone else." It means she is no freeloader; she lives off her own work rather than the work of others.

### v. 30 **fears the LORD**

In other words, "is wise" since the fear of the LORD is "the beginning of knowledge" (Pr 1:7, the motto of the book of Proverbs), and "the beginning of wisdom" (Pr 9:10; cf. Ps 111:10).

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## Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Guest writer - Kara Gunn

Mother's Day is here again and every year I reflect on my journey as a mom. There are always the encouraging moments when I remembered to bake them cookies, pull off another crazy birthday party or maintain my composure when my toddler was screaming in the store. I look back at the memories I captured in pictures and see that I did some things right. More often than not, however, I am plagued with the thoughts of all the things I could have done. I could have played with them more. I could have cherished the snuggles instead of thinking about all of the things still left to do before I could go to bed. I could have played chase during the laundry time . . . the list goes on and on. And then I realize, I can never do it all or ever be good enough. But if I love the Lord and point my kids to Him, I am on the right path. So then my perspective changes from what I did or didn't do, to what did I do to show my kids Jesus this past year? Did they see me trusting God when I didn't know what would happen? Did they see me read His word and seek Him daily? Did I pray with them and tell them how much He loves them? If that will become our focus, the other things will fall into place and we can rest in Him.

### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: 1 Kings 17

1. How did the Lord plan to provide for Elijah in Zarephath?
2. What did Elijah tell the widow to do when he asked her for bread and she said she had none?
3. Did the widow ever run out of flour and oil?

### What Do You Think

1. Do you think the widow believed Elijah when he said the oil and flour wouldn't run out? Why or why not?
2. Imagine you are the widow. What would you be thinking when Elijah takes your son upstairs after he had stopped breathing?

### What R U Going To Do

Moms work hard for their families every week. Make a list of all the things your mom does at home for your family. Choose one chore and decide as a family to do it for your mom this week. You might even commit to continue helping her with it. That is a great way to honor your mom this week and all year around!

## MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Kindness/Goodness - Treating others better than myself

Memory Verse

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

## KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC \_\_\_\_ and Verse \_\_\_\_\_. Family completed **Say** \_\_\_\_\_ **Think** \_\_\_\_\_ **Do** \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.  
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

**Tom Bulick** (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-five years and have one son, Zach.

**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).