

“Her children call her blessed”
Proverbs 31:28-29

Introduction

- 1. Mothers Day is celebrated around the world:** Norway = second Sunday of February; England = second Sunday of Lent; Sweden = last Sunday of May; Russia = last Sunday of November; Panama = December 8; Indonesia = December 22.
- 2. Moms are important everywhere.** If you Google the word mother there are 761 million websites to visit. Fathers have only 424 million. Mothers Day itself has 62,400,000 listings.
One website has calculated that the average Mom in America provides \$61,436 in annual services not counting outside-the-home employment.¹
I tried to research how many Mothers Day cards are sent each year but couldn't find the number. I'm sure it's a lot. Big business.
- 3. One of the most famous of Mothers Day greetings was written thousands of years ago by an anonymous author and became the last chapter of the Old Testament book of Proverbs.**
- 4. Proverbs 31:10-31**

*A wife of noble character who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*She opens her arms to the poor
and extends her hands to the needy.*

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

*She makes coverings for her bed;
she is clothed in fine linen and purple.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

*“Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all.”*

*Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but 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.*

5. This list has been read to millions of women for 3000 years and has generated uncounted feelings of guilt, inadequacy and not-measuring-up.

But, the woman described has had her critics over the centuries: there’s nothing about her personal relationship with her husband—so maybe she was difficult to get along with; nothing about her intellectual or emotional qualities—so maybe she had a low IQ and a low EQ; her religious practices aren’t mentioned—maybe she skipped worship services. Listen to the critics and you start to think she’s a loser.

It reminds me of the old story about a man with an amazing hunting dog. He bragged to his friends about all the exceptional skills his dog had and all the tricks his dog could do. His cynical friend got tired of the bragging and doubted the dog stories. One day he took the dog and the friend on a duck hunting trip. The hunter shot a duck that fell 200 yards out in the lake. The dog ran out *on top of the water*, picked up the dead duck in his soft mouth and brought him to the shore where he dropped it at the feet of the hunter. “Pretty amazing!” he said to his friend. His critical friend replied, “That dog can’t swim.”

There are always critics who love to find something missing.

6. If you are a born critic, cut the lady of Proverbs 31 some slack and listen to her virtues:

- Exemplary character. She is worth more than rubies. Her husband knows her better than anyone and he has complete confidence in her. Every day she brings good to her husband and to others. She blesses rather than curses. She helps rather than hurts. You know you can always trust her.

- Hard work. She gets up early. She works long hours. She feeds her family with interesting menus—including imported ingredients. She’s “hands on” for her home and family. She plans ahead so that when winter comes she is ready. She makes clothes for her family and bedding for them to sleep on.
- Good with money. She’s a smart business woman. She saves and invests money.
- Cares for the poor. “*She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.*” In other words, she works hard but gives to others from what she has earned. This is a consistent theme through the Old Testament, that you can always tell who is a righteous person by attitudes and actions toward the poor. The two verses that introduce the description of this wonderful woman are powerful in their teaching: “*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of the destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy*” (Proverbs 31:8-9). She is a righteous and virtuous woman and the proof is in the way “*she opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.*”
- Speaks with wisdom. When she speaks, listen carefully. Her words are smart and good. She is not cruel or unkind and thinks before she talks.

7. **She may have her critics but I am her admirer!** She may seem like an idealized myth but I know many godly women who share her virtues.
8. **But it is not these lofty words I invite you to remember this Mothers Day.** The words to remember and memorize are words of encouragement in Proverbs 31:28-29.
Proverbs 31:28-29

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

*“Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all.”*

These words are not about her—they are about her children and husband. This is not a description of what she said or did for others but what others said to her. These are not God’s words of encouragement to us but our words of encouragement to her.

Blessing & Praise

1. **Even the very best of women need blessing and praise.** According to *Family Circle* magazine, 86% of mothers think they don’t get enough respect.²
2. **My guess is that the unnamed woman of Proverbs 31 took greater delight in the blessing of her children than in nice clothes, servant girls and a good return on her land investment.** And, if she didn’t receive the blessing of her children none of the other stuff much mattered. Knowing what we know about her, she didn’t do the good she did because of the praise she received; she worked hard, was generous to the poor and spoke wisely because that’s the kind of person she was. But, to have her children bless her meant everything.

Often praise comes from those who know us least. They see only one part of our lives. Work hard and you become EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH with a special parking place. Invest well and you get a bank statement that says you have more money. But, words of blessing from children who know all about you carry the greatest weight.

- 3. So, here's my Mothers Day recommendation.** Buy a discounted Mothers Day card tomorrow and mail it to Mom in August. In September, send an email to all your friends saying what a great Mom you have and make sure she gets a blind copy. In October bring her a dozen roses (they'll be cheaper after Mothers Day). And, ten times in the next ten months tell her what she has done well.
Bless her. Praise her for everything you can think of. Look for every opportunity to say, "You are a really good Mom." Be an encouragement!
- 4. This is advice specially aimed at adult children.** "*Her children arise and call her blessed.*" Read that as "grow up" and call her blessed. Not that the blessing of young children isn't important and loved but there is an extra punch when it comes from children who speak from a lifetime of knowing her.

Number One

- 1. And, it's not just from children. It's from her husband.**
Proverbs 31:28-29
*Her children arise and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:
"Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all."*
- 2. OK, I have a confession to make.** I've been married to Charleen most of my life and I have never given her a Mothers Day card. As I explained to her years ago, "she's not my mother." But, I have praised her 10,000 times and more.
- 3. The husband of Proverbs 31 doesn't primarily praise her for her motherhood but for who she is as a person and what she does.** These are words for husbands whose wives are mothers and for those who are not.
- 4. He speaks directly to the issue that most women wonder about: *How do I compare to others? Do I measure up?*** She wants to know what her husband thinks. His words are powerful: "*Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.*"
- 5. I've always had a little trouble with the many plaques and t-shirts that say "#1 Mom" or "#1 Wife" (ok, I admit there are a lot more t-shirts about Moms than about wives).** Whenever you say that your Mom is #1 and the best Mom in the world it sounds like you are saying that your Mom is better than my Mom and that's kind of insulting.

But, we know that the husband of Proverbs 31 says this relationally not statistically. He's saying, of all the women I know, as far as I am concerned, you are the very best; "*you surpass them all.*" What wonderful words for any husband to say to his wife.

6. **So, here's the practical question: *Do her children and husband praise her because she is so wonderful or is she so wonderful because of the way her children and husband bless and praise her?*** Actually, it is a question that needs no answer. The two go together. They bless and praise her because of who she is and all she does; and, they make her all the better with their blessings and praise.

Conclusion

1. **Do you wonder what this woman looks like?** I imagine that she is beautiful and charming to be around. Sort of a magnet and the life of the best of parties. But, we really don't know. There is no description. To the contrary, the book of Proverbs finishes with words every Christian woman needs to know:

Proverbs 31:30

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

Godliness is at her central core. Her relationship to God is most to be praised.

2. **And, the last line of this biblical Mothers Day card says:
Proverbs 31:31**

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

3. **Put it together and it is the Bible's advice:**
Be a godly woman.
Bless and praise her for who she is.

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¹ <http://amfix.blogs.cnn.com/2011/05/06/insure-com-says-mom-is-worth-61436year-do-you-agree/>

² *TIME*, May 6, 2002.