

Motherhood

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This morning, we come together to honor and praise mothers!

Being a mother is no easy task. In today's culture, the demands and pressures placed on mothers are intense. The stereotyped mother of today's culture is one who organizes and manages her household entirely and with excellence. This true supermom is able to handle with ease:

Keeping up on the household chores of laundry, cooking, and cleaning

Making sure that her husband and children are up on time, dressed well, and fed well

Teaching and training her children to be respectful, well mannered, and well behaved

Making sure that everyone makes it too all of their practices, games, and appointments on time

Managing a merged schedule from everyone and eliminating any conflicts of events

Working a full time job

Serving her church and community

Being involved in PTO and school events

Being a counselor, nurse, tutor, seamstress, and chauffeur

This supermom stereotype is unfortunately no different in the church. The Proverbs 31 woman is our unspoken expectation. Listen to a description of this supermom:

Proverbs 31:10-31

10 A wife of noble character who can find?

She is worth far more than rubies.

11 Her husband has full confidence in her

and lacks nothing of value.

12 She brings him good, not harm,

all the days of her life.

13 She selects wool and flax

and works with eager hands.

14 She is like the merchant ships,

bringing her food from afar.

15 She gets up while it is still night;
she provides food for her family
and portions for her female servants.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

31 Honor her for all that her hands have done,
and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

All of these attributes and traits are awesome goals and a woman who meets these all of these expectations would certainly be honored and praised!

However, is this proverb God's absolute standard for women, or is it what the first verse of this chapter indicates that it is – the sayings of King Lemuel's mother who had high expectations for the wife that her son would take on and her predecessor as queen? In either case, it was included in God's word to give women a guide and goals to strive for toward a Godly character and lifestyle; one that is truly honorable and praiseworthy!

However, there is something that I felt God wanted to remind everyone, and especially women this morning.

Although God certainly has generalized characteristics that we are all to strive toward (mainly to all be transformed into the likeness of Christ), He has also created us each very uniquely for a divine purpose. After all, it is only when we all work together in our uniqueness that we fill our role to become the body of Christ.

There is no such thing as a perfect mother. God knows exactly what your unique strengths and weaknesses are. God knew these even while He knit your children within your womb with their own unique strengths and weaknesses. He considered you able and worthy to be a good mother to the children which He entrusted to you. He even knew the mistakes that you would make before you made a single one of them. He has given you everything that you need to be a great mother to your children!

This is extremely freeing and relieving to know and to understand as a mother. The supermom stereotype that we have in our culture, and even in the church, is not the standard that God holds anyone to. Unfortunately, many women are crippled and held captive by these high expectations that they have of themselves. Every mother wants only the best for her children and family; she desires to be everything that everybody needs.

Through this high expectation, however, the enemy can easily bring about severe emotions of being depressed, overwhelmed, alone, disappointed, dissatisfied, unappreciated, etc. when they fall short of this standard, which they are all going to do. These emotions then cause a woman to disconnect from their families, feeling like a failure. Once disconnected from her family, this causes her to actually fail to be a good mother, which causes those same emotions all over again and the crazy cycle starts spinning out of control!

There is a solution, though! When a mother realizes that they are free to be themselves and mother within the boundaries of who God created them to be, there is such freedom and fulfillment available! Lowering your expectations to match the ones that God has given you will enable you to be the best mother that you can possibly be. Now, this doesn't mean that you excuse behavior and attitudes in your lives that do not honor God. However, it does mean that you stop trying to be like someone who God never created you to be. Ask God to show you the mother that you are supposed to be to your children and be that, not like someone else.

Joyce Meyer gives these tips to enjoying who God created you to be:

1. Declare what God's word says about you
2. Avoid comparing yourself to others
3. Focus on your potential instead of your limitations
4. Learn to cope with criticism

I believe that God intentionally designed motherhood to be a mysterious life adventure full of failures and successes. Although there are thousands of parenting resources and many specific to motherhood, there simply can never be a single, detailed guide on how to be the perfect mother. Scripture gives

all of the principles and guidelines that are needed, but even scripture itself reveals that there is no such thing as a perfect mother.

Let's start with Eve. She is the mother of all mankind. She had many firsts in her lifetime. She was the first woman to have ever existed, the only woman ever to be born without sin, the first cloned human having been created from Adam's rib, the first wife, the first mother, the first to sin, the first mother to lose a child and simultaneously the first mother of a murderer, the reason for painful childbirth, and the reason for our being.

She had no mother of her own to turn to for advice and help in being a good wife or mother; she was very much alone after being driven out of Eden after disobeying God. One can only begin to imagine all that she had gone through as a woman. She is the first example that scripture provides as a mother and certainly one that is far from perfect. In fact, her family became so wicked that God regretted that He had made mankind. However, despite her failures, she was also very successful and blessed with many children who went on to perform many firsts including building cities, farming, creating tools, making music and instruments, building families themselves, and many other great things.

God reminds us of the priority that woman need to remember throughout motherhood. The first task that God gave to Eve was to be Adam's wife and helper, secondly to be a mother. Though it is easy to do, a mother cannot neglect being a good wife and example of a good wife to her children while being a mother. Failing to maintain a healthy marriage and neglecting one another throughout the child raising years can prove to be devastating to families. Both husbands and wives, don't forget to continue dating your spouse, investing in them, and prioritizing them; raising your children together as one.

Although Eve made her share of mistakes that affect us even to today, God blessed her and her children.

Another significant, but imperfect mother that we see in scripture is Sarah. Sarah gives hope to the women who are perhaps still waiting to be mothers.

She taught us about the importance of waiting on God's perfect timing and not to rush things by making that exact mistake herself. Sarah decided to have her child through her servant Hagar and as a result, this child lived in hostility toward everyone along with his children forever. Just as Eve's decision affected us today, Sarah's decision still impacts us today as that child, Ishmael, is the father of the Arab nation including the Muslims that we know today who carry Ishmael's same traits. Despite Sarah's attempt to quicken God's timing, God still blessed her in her old age with a child name Isaac and it was through Isaac that the nation of Israel was birthed and blessed.

Another significant, but imperfect mother that we see in scripture is Bathsheba. She caught King David's eye when she was bathing one evening. He had her brought to him to make love to her, although they were both married. Her husband, Uriah, was a faithful servant in David's army. David had his army's commander place Uriah out into the fiercest of the fighting and then to back off so that he would die, which all came to pass. Although displeasing to the Lord, David brought Bathsheba to his house and married her. The child was born, but because of David's sins, the child's life was cut short. While comforting Bathsheba, they once again made love and Bathsheba again gave birth, this time to a son named Solomon, who succeeded David as king and went on to build a temple for the Lord.

Bathsheba carries a bad reputation because of her relationship with David. However, she is not completely at fault. After all, you can imagine how she must have felt being called upon by the king. To deny David may have meant her life. Not only was she placed in such a horrible place when David brought her to his home, but it didn't end that evening when she went back home. That evening followed her the rest of her life. It cost her the life of her faithful husband and also the life of her own child and her own life was changed forever.

However, God still gives us hope in spite of even our darkest of circumstances and can redeem them. Bathsheba was also the mother of Solomon, who was a great king of Israel whom was given far greater wisdom and riches than any man every had or will have. God chose Bathsheba to be in the lineage

of Jesus Himself through her son Solomon. Even if you have become a mother through the least desirable of circumstances, God still can take even our biggest mistakes, or even circumstances beyond our control, and bless them and do something awesome through them.

There are many, many other examples that God gave us in scripture of imperfect mothers, just like you, that God blessed in awesome ways.

This morning, I want to leave every mother with hope. I feel that God wants to remind each of you to:

Be the mother that God created you to be, not to compare yourself to others

Accept God's grace, knowing that you won't be the perfect mother (you're in good company)

Remember not to neglect being a good wife in the pursuit of being a good mother

Be patient and wait on God's perfect timing in everything

Expect the unexpected and enjoy the mysterious adventure of motherhood!

This morning, we honor and praise you for being the divinely unique mother that you are!