

Great Women of the Bible

by John R. Rice

The sermon emphasizes the importance of a virtuous woman, a good housekeeper, and wanting children, and highlights the role of prayer in getting and raising children.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 1:19, Psalm 68:6, Psalm 127:3, Proverbs 31:10, Luke 1:13, Ephesians 5:22, 2 Timothy 1:5

Topics: "Biblical Womanhood", "Family Values"

Description

John R. Rice preaches about the virtues of a godly woman as described in Proverbs 31, emphasizing the importance of a woman's value, trustworthiness, wisdom, kindness, and dedication to her household. He highlights the significance of a woman's role as a wife and mother, stressing the need for reverence towards her husband and the impact of her influence on her children. Rice also discusses the biblical examples of women like Hannah, Suzannah Wesley, and Timothy's mother and grandmother, showcasing the powerful influence of a godly mother in shaping the lives of their children and the importance of prayer in raising up preachers and godly offspring.

Transcript

"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. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands."

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."-Prov. 31:10-13, 26-31.

There are some wonderful things here about a godly woman.

I have had more reason to thank God for good women than most men. Mrs. Rice and I have been married now 55 1/2 years. Then God has given us six lovely daughters. Then some fine women help me at the Sword of the Lord Foundation. Some have been here many years. How devoted and sacrificial they are! And everywhere I go, godly women sing in the choir, run the nursery, help do house-to-house visitation, teach in the Sunday school, and back up the work in giving. Thank God for good women!

I. THE GODLY WOMAN OF PROVERBS 31 A Virtuous Woman Priced Above Rubies There are many things about this woman in Proverbs 31. First, she is virtuous. Virtue is commendable in a man, but there is something precious and very special about a virtuous woman. It is not surprising when we see Arab women with a veil over their faces, but that doesn't mean every woman ought to cover her face. God made women to be beautiful. It is all right to put on perfume and fix up to look and smell nice.

But why look like someone gave you a black eye! God intended women to be pretty and attractive, but some of you go to extremes. When the bride comes down the aisle, people exclaim, "Isn't she beautiful!" All brides are. God put beauty in all good women. And he who findeth a wife findeth a good thing. "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies." In a sense, a woman is more woman than a man is a man. Let me explain. A poet said long ago: Love is of man's life, A thing apart; 'Tis woman's whole existence.

A man may be a statesman, a blacksmith, a farmer, a preacher. He may be in politics or run his own business. He has his work to do. But a woman has no greater work than to be a good wife and mother. She may work to help her husband. And she may sometimes be left on her own resources and have to work outside the home. But the highest ambition of any woman should be to be a good wife and mother. In some sense, that is your career, the highest point at which a woman can aim. So a virtuous woman is above rubies in price.

Who can find a virtuous woman? A woman is more essentially feminine than a man is male, because a man has other duties and careers. That means a woman is more vulnerable. Because of that, you should be careful about your dress and your modest ways. The Lord said Adam was not deceived, but Eve, being deceived, was in the transgression. It may be that Adam said, "My wife has sinned by wanting to eat of the fruit, but I don't want her left alone in a wicked world, so I will eat with her."

I do not know how much Adam understood, but he went into the world of sin because Eve did. So a woman, especially a working woman, needs to be careful. If possible, be a homemaker. This woman worked at home and sold girdles. She had her candle lighted late at night and was up before dawn preparing food. She was thrifty and hardworking. With the labor of her hands she purchased a field. Sometimes good women may need to work out in the world. If so, there ought to be a holy fence around you, a certain modesty and reserve.

There is a vulnerability about you, a beauty that you do not want to despise. She Revered Her Husband and Was Subject to Him Now the greatest virtue of this woman of Proverbs 31 focused on her husband. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." She is a good wife, a virtuous woman, so her highest aim is to please her husband. Now there are many virtues in a good woman, but God puts this first. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."-Eph. 5:22-24. And then: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."-Vs. 25. That is putting a woman in a very sacred and holy place. And a man's love for his wife is not to be just infatuation. Normal sexual attraction is proper in husband and wife; but when the honeymoon is over there should remain a certain unity of heart, an enjoyment of and a dependence on each other, a close friendship of heart, a oneness of mind.

A husband is to love his wife when she is young and weighs 110, then he is to love her when she weighs 180 and waddles when she walks. He is to love her when her hair is unkempt, when she burns the bread, when her beds are not made and the dishes are in the sink. He is to love her as Christ loved the church, not because she is so lovable, but because he is a man of character. Christ loves us, not because we are good or worthy or beautiful, but He loves us because of His great character.

You lament that your love has grown cold. Then warm it up. If God said for a man to love his wife, he can. In Titus 2 God commanded the aged women to "teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children." So, dear lady, if God said to love your husband, you can. If you loved him once, you can still love him. You are not to go by circumstances; you are to do right by character. Love abides and with it, happiness and joy. A wife is to be subject to her husband and make him a good wife.

There is something beautiful when a man has full confidence in his wife. Every man ought to have someone who thinks him the smartest fellow alive. A woman ought to think her mate the strongest, the most loyal, the best looking. A man needs a wife who can say, "I can sure depend on my husband. He is the smartest fellow and the best one I know." A good man is a better, stronger man if someone admires, loves, trusts and follows him. What are the virtues of a good Christian woman?

SHE IS A GOOD HOUSEKEEPER

Notice how carefully our woman of chapter 31 keeps her house, does her sewing, and is up early to prepare food-a good homemaker.

In I Timothy, Paul was inspired to write that it is all right to take under the care of the church an older woman who is past sixty, if she has been the wife of one man, if she has washed the saints' feet and relieved the afflicted. But he said about the younger women, 'Let them marry, bear children and guide the house.'

A wonderful career for a wife and mother is to be a homemaker, a housekeeper. Little attentions in the home amount to so much.

My mother died before I was six. I remember the cake she made for my fifth birthday. It had my name on top in little cinnamon drops-my last birthday cake until I married!

"God setteth the solitary in families" (Ps. 68:6). Aren't you glad you aren't hatched out of an egg and scratching for your own worms at two weeks old, like a chicken! God puts us in families. He gives us people to love us and understand us.

Thank God for women who make home a little bit of Heaven! A home is the closest imitation of Heaven in this world, because there people love you when you do wrong, love you when you fail. They think the best of you, no matter what may come.

SHE IS THRIFTY

The Bible says she is very thrifty. She saves money.

Comic Art Buckwald in the daily newspaper was talking about a certain department of the government. Congress had voted to spend 31 billion dollars. The fellow in this comic telling the tale asked another,

"How do we spend it?"

"Build a building."

"We have already built a building we didn't need which cost 3 1/2 million dollars. But we have to do something with that allotted money."

The other said, "I don't know what to tell you."

"Did you ever try to spend a billion dollars in a day?" he was asked.

He answered, "No, but my wife has!"

Thank God for a thrifty woman with a good husband! There is comfort and strength when a man has a wife looking after his happiness, after his bed, after his clothes, after his table, after his children.

God bless good women! One virtue of hers is being a homekeeper, a homemaker.

SHE HAS A KIND TONGUE

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Say, I like that woman! I guess the Lord made women to talk a great deal-but not to talk bad.

Years ago my father said about a doctor's wife who lived near him in Decatur, Texas, "I never knew a woman to talk so much but never say evil about anybody."

Can it be said of you: "A woman in whose tongue is the law of kindness"?

Do you want to be queen in your home? Then curb your tongue. Let it speak only with love, grace, thoughtfulness, forgiveness and kindness. You may bring your tithe, go to prayer meeting, read the Bible, and seem religious; but a sharp tongue will pretty well nullify all that. God give to good women this virtue: "In her tongue is the law of kindness."

SHE WANTS CHILDREN

That is not surprising. Psalm 127:3 says, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." God have mercy on women who want to abort that precious one given of God! Some women want the pleasures of a wife without the duties of a mother; the pleasures of a Hollywood whore, but not the responsibilities, joys and duties of a good wife and mother. The Bible says:

"Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them."-Ps. 127:3-5.

My daughter Joy and her husband, Roger, have six children-three boys and three girls. When the sixth baby came, Roger sent out a little card, My sixth arrow in my quiver.

Someone says, "O Brother Rice, nobody ought to have more than one or, at most, two children in this day and time."

Who said so? God didn't. Do you want the heathen to populate the world? Do you want the drunks, the perverts, the infidels to fill up the world? What a crazy idea! God wants Christians to raise up children in a godly family.

Suzannah Wesley had nineteen children. By today's standard, that's seventeen too many. Number thirteen was John Wesley, who founded the Methodist movement and who won hundreds of thousands of souls. And number seventeen was Charles Wesley, who wrote six thousand hymns, great songs of the Faith that millions sing. Do you think Suzannah Wesley had too many children? Would you rather she had stopped before John Wesley was born-number thirteen-and before Charles was born-number seventeen?

She not only gave birth to nineteen children, but she raised each for God. She said to her husband, "With our servants and children, we must have family altar, with Bible study and teaching. And if you won't do it, I will." So when he didn't, she did.

She spent one hour each week teaching each child to report on what he had memorized that week. "I noticed you did so and so. You have to correct that"-an hour a week spent with each one! Those children turned out to be pretty good, didn't they?

Good women, make motherhood a profession, your business in life.

Dr. Bob Jones, Sr., was the eleventh child of his mother. Had they stopped with ten, they wouldn't have had a preacher in the family. Do you think Mrs. Jones had too many children?

Others died in infancy, but the eighth living child of my father was Dr. Bill Rice. Do you think my father had too many children?

I am saying, Christians ought to be raising good people for God.

And so this woman's children rise up and call her blessed.

II. OTHER GREAT WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

In the Bible, many good women wanted children.

Jacob was deceived. The girl, Leah, was put in bed with him, and he didn't realize it until the next morning. Later Laban gave him Rachel, his choice.

God looked with pity on Leah. Because she wasn't loved as much, He let her have children; but Rachel was barren. Rachel envied her sister and said to her husband, Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." He answered, 'Am I God?' But God remembered Rachel, opened her womb, and she bare Joseph and Benjamin.

Ninety-year-old Sarah prayed for a child! And when at last God gave her Isaac, she said, "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me." He was named Isaac, which means laughter.

One of mine is named Grace, one is Joy. Yes, Christian children ought to bring great happiness and be wanted.

If I had raised brats like some do, I would be anxious to get them out of the house and off to school, like some of you. In the summertime you can hardly wait to send yours off to camp. I would want them out of

sight too, had I raised the kind you raise, with no discipline, no family altar, no sweet fellowship.

Our gang likes to get together. Twice a year we do just that-in the summer and at Christmas: six daughters, six sons-in-law, and a bunch of grandchildren. The grandchildren who are married bring their spouses. Sweethearts also come. So at Christmas we have sixty or more, with the boys sleeping on couches, others on the floor in sleeping bags, and out in my woodworking shop and in borrowed houses.

Parents should enjoy their children; and if raised right, you will. Raise them to live for God, and you will be proud and happy with them.

Godly Bible women wanted children.

Hannah Prayed for Samuel

Hannah's husband, Elkanah, had another wife, Peninnah, who had children. When she mocked Hannah with 'I have children, and you can't have any,' this broke Hannah's heart.

She went to God in prayer. As she wept, her husband said, 'Am I not better than ten sons? And you are my favorite wife.'

But this did not comfort Hannah. She wanted a boy, so she went to the temple to pray. As she prayed, "her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." Old Eli, the high priest, thinking her drunk, said, "Put away thy wine from thee."

And she answered, 'I am not drunk. I have a burdened heart, a sorrowful spirit. I have poured out my soul before the Lord.'

Eli replied, "The God of Israel grant thee thy petition."

Hannah then went home, "and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her" (I Sam. 1:19). She conceived and bare Samuel. Oh, how glad she was! She promised God, "as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord" (I Sam. 1:28). What a good thing!

Bible women wanted children.

HERE IS A GOOD WAY TO PROVIDE PREACHERS! Zacharias, an old priest, worked in the temple. One day he and his wife were there. They had been praying so long. Both must be seventy years old-long past the childbearing age; but they prayed. An angel came in the temple. When Zacharias saw him, he was troubled. But the angel said, "Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John" (Luke 1:13). Zacharias answered, "Whereby shall I know this?

For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years" (Luke 1:18). The angel assured him he was going to have a baby. Zacharias knew Elizabeth had prayed for a boy to be a priest like his father, to be a godly man. So the Lord said: "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God."-Luke 1:15,16.

Don't you know she was overjoyed with John the Baptist, this Spirit-filled, soul-winning, godly preacher whom God gave in answer to prayer! Prayer is how to get children and how to raise them. I once preached

on John the Baptist at a conference at Bob Jones University. I said, "Why don't you ask God to give you a boy, and promise Him that you will raise him at the family altar, with discipline, will get him saved and teach him the Word; then later send him to college and get him ready to be a preacher?"

I said, "How many will promise God, if He will give you a boy baby, you will raise him to be a soul winner or a preacher?" A number of people stood, including an evangelist named Perkins. He had been married for 14 years, and they had no children. Others also stood. This was in the spring. That fall when I was at Greenville speaking for Dr. Harold Sightler, this man came and said, "Brother Rice, we are going to have a boy!" "How do you know it will be a boy?" "Because I prayed for a boy."

And he is going to be born in February. His name is going to be Joel, and he is going to be a Baptist preacher." Sure enough, in February the baby was born. He was a boy, and they named him Joel! Later I was with Dr. John Waters at Laurens, South Carolina. He said, "Dr. Rice, remember that time you preached at Bob Jones University on John the Baptist? My wife and I stood. This boy standing here was born one year from that time, and he is the joy of my heart. He has given his life to the ministry, and he already wins souls." (He was then seventeen.)

What a wonderful answer to prayer! The Bible gives many examples of people who prayed for children. The Lord must be pleased when a woman wants to be a mother, when she wants a godly boy or girl to bless and comfort the home and to be a soul winner. I was in Sacramento, California at the Highland Baptist Church. I left the pulpit after the morning service and went back to the book table. A lady came up and said, "Brother Rice, my name is Barbara [I can't think of the last name.].

You don't know me, but you know my husband. Seven years ago when you and Dr. Hyles were at Fresno, California, you preached on prayer. My husband asked you to pray for us. We had been married seven years and had no child. You prayed right then." Now this woman, seven years later, said, "Brother Rice, 269 days from that time (one day less than nine months) this boy was born." She pointed to a six-year-old and said, "Every time I thank God for that boy, I thank God for your prayer for us."

For a woman to want to be a mother is scriptural. It pleases God, for He made women to be mothers. Out at the Bill Rice Ranch one day a young couple said, "Brother Rice, we have been married several years, and we want a baby so badly." We stopped right then and prayed. The next year they were back to camp. The man said, "Do you remember when you prayed with us last year?" He reached over and patted his wife's tummy! "She is now with child!" Listen, godly women prayed, and God gave them children.

Not a bad idea for us, is it? We would have more and better preachers if we had that kind of praying fathers and mothers. My Mother and Father Gave Me to God to Be a Preacher May I tell you about my mother? My mother died when I was five years old. One weekend when I was twenty-four, I went to Amarillo, Texas to see my mother's younger sister, my Aunt Essie. She had a sweet alto voice, and she and I sang together. She brought me a letter and said, "John, I think you would like to see this letter."

"This looks like Mama's handwriting. I saw some of her love letters to Dad," I said. Aunt Essie replied, "Yes, it is from your mother." She had been dead eighteen or nineteen years. I was now teaching in Wayland College, Plainview, Texas, and coached football. I read it. We lived down in South Texas in Atascosa County, below San Antonio. My mother wrote: Very hot down here and very dry. The crops are not good this year. Willie is not very well [my father]. Let me tell you about little Porter [the baby].

He has two new teeth. Gertrude is a comfort. She takes care of the baby and dries the dishes. She is getting to be a real helper [seven or eight years old]. Ruth is the quietest little thing. [She is now a retired teacher down in Texas.] And George is into mischief from morning till night. [He always was. He was principal of a high school in Crystal City, Texas and went Home to be with the Lord some time ago.] But let me tell you about my preacher boy. I said to Aunt Essie, "Wait a minute!

Aunt Essie, she has talked about all the others. Now she called me 'her preacher boy!'" Aunt Essie said, "She never called you anything else." Astonished, I said, "I didn't know that. I do remember when I was four or five that when people would say, 'Sonny, what is your name?' I always answered, 'John the Baptist preacher.'" (Somebody taught me that.) When I went back to Decatur to see Dad, I said, "Dad, I saw a letter from Mama, and she called me her preacher boy. I didn't know about that."

He said, "Yes, when you were born, we were so glad to have a boy that we gave you to God and asked Him to make you into a preacher." I said, "Why didn't you tell me? I feel like I am wasting time." The Lord did tell me, and soon I was in the ministry. But I know a lot of the visions in my soul and burden for souls came because Mother laid me out before the Lord like the mother of John the Baptist did.

HOW WONDERFUL THE INFLUENCE OF A GODLY MOTHER!

There was Hannah who gave birth to Samuel. Old Eli the priest was a good man, but he spoiled his kids. Those boys were wild and unconverted and with no reverence for the offerings. God said, "Éhis sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (I Sam. 3:13). They committed adultery with the women who came to the Tabernacle, and God killed those boys for their ways.

In the midst of that kind of influence, at the temple where Hannah brought him, Samuel stayed clean and good and a prophet of God; and I think it was because of his mother.

Hannah must have kept him till he was weaned. That didn't mean until he quit nursing, but when he got old enough to be away from his mother, maybe at age four or five or six. Then she took him down to the temple, and every year brought him some new garments. Oh, that godly woman made him into a good man those years when she had him and during those visits to see him at the temple. In the middle of a family life, with others around, and in the midst of a wicked priesthood, Samuel still stayed straight. Oh, the influence of a godly mother!

It was so with Suzannah Wesley.

Paul wrote Timothy, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice" (II Tim. 1:5). Then he said, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation" (II Tim. 3:15).

Timothy got that from his godly mother and grandmother. His father was a Greek, and perhaps a heathen. The Bible doesn't say he was a Christian. I know Timothy was not circumcised until after he started preaching, and Paul had him circumcised. So we suppose the old father may not have been a Christian. But Timothy had a godly mother and grandmother who taught him the Bible and how to trust the Lord.

Oh, the influence of a godly mother!

I wonder why we don't sing "Tell Mother I'll Be There" as often as we used to:

When I was but a little child, how well I recollect,
How I would grieve my mother with my folly and neglect;
And now that she had gone to Heav'n I miss her tender care,
O Saviour, tell my mother I'll be there.
Tell Mother I'll be there, in answer to her prayer,
This message, blessed Saviour, to her bear!
Tell Mother I'll be there, Heav'n's joys with her to share;
Yes, tell my darling mother I'll be there.

I think I know why. If they have a cigarette-smoking mother, with bobbed hair and wearing pants or shorts, children don't feel like telling that kind of a mother, "Yes, tell my darling mother I'll be there." But young people will sing it to an old-fashioned mother who loves the Lord, reads the Bible, wins her children to Christ, prays with them and loves them. Boys go to Heaven because they had godly mothers.

Oh, the influence of a godly mother!

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