

"The Invaluable Woman of God"

Lessons from the Proverbs 31 Woman

Family Matters

In this study we will be looking at “Family Matters” and how as women we have important roles within the family. But before we can discuss our position and function within the family we must first look at the family unit. In our western culture and society our families and households may appear different than those of other cultures or even those presented in the Bible. Not all families are made up the same or consist of the same number of people. Some of us may come from very large integrated families, while others come from very small families. Some of us may have a rich sense of tradition and heritage while others can barely trace back their lineage let alone incorporate traditions. Some of us may have had positive loving family experiences, while others may have come from broken families with less than positive experiences. But no matter our story or experience we have an idea about family. But is there a normative regarding family? And if so, what is the norm? What are the standards that define a “family”? Is a family defined by association or blood or something else? Let us dive in now as we discover what a family is, how God intends our families to function, and how we as women of God have a place and purpose in the family to serve Him and those He has placed us with—for His Glory!

Day 1

Before you begin your study, take a few moments to settle yourself and pray. Ask the Lord to teach you what it means to be a part of a family as a virtuous woman and to reveal to your heart any areas that you may need to surrender to Him regarding yourself and your own family.

Part 1: Family in past and present culture.

The Old Testament way of family is very different that our Western societal view of family. In our society the individual is often stressed as the center rather than a group. Individualism has caused us to focus on the individual’s needs and perspectives rather than on relationships and groups. By the trends in society we see a swing in the tender balance between individual rights and family rights being skewed in the favor of individualism. In contrast, Israel's social structure was tribal and therefore corporate in its internal relationships, creating secure structured communities. In these communities the families perceived themselves as totalities, bound together through internal organization that made their presence felt in each individual member. The individual was neither overlooked, nor was he considered the unit on which the society was built. Instead, the family was the unit, and the individual found his place in society through the family and its extensions.

As Christians we have found our place in the family of God to which we now belong to through Christ Jesus. We are not the center, for we are not our own, but we were bought with a price for the Glory of Christ Jesus our Redeemer. In God’s economy family is much more than blood, or association, it is love and servitude towards one another that makes us truly family. By faith we have entered into God’s family and we live that faith by following the Lord Jesus and His ways.

1. Read the following verses and write down what they are saying about the believer, family, love, and servitude.

a. Matthew 3:8-10

b. 1 Timothy 5:8

c. John 13:34

d. Romans 12:10

e. Galatians 5:13

We see from these verses that there is not entitlement just by “blood” as we see in Matt. 3:8-10, God can bring forth sons from stones but is looking for those who bear good fruit, this is love and servitude. In our walk as Christians we are to do good and to preference others above ourselves. It is through love and servitude that we establish our families and the body of Christ, with fruit that will remain!

The Words for Family in Hebrew

There are two words in Hebrew that are rendered as “family” or “household” in our English translations of the Bible, the *bayit* (house) or *bet ab* (father's house). These terms designating household and extended family.

As virtuous women we want to build our lives and families based on God’s way and not the worlds. We want our “life center” to be Jesus who has saved us and by His Word guides us so that we from our *bet ab* (Father’s house) may influence our family and the world around us.

2. Take time to reflect about your *bet ab* (Father’s House) and how you as a part of His household can reflect His ways in your *bayit* (house). No matter what your position in your family you have instruction according to the Word of God on how to be. Write your thoughts here.

3. What do the following verses teach us about our responsibilities and what are some practical ways we can practice it?

As Parents: Duet 11:18-19, Eph 6:4, Col 3:19,21

Instruction:

Application:

As Children: Eph 6:1-2, Col 3:20, 1 pet 5:5

Instruction:

Application:

As Relatives: 1 Timothy 5:8, 1 Timothy 5:4

Instruction:

Application:

As Women: 1 Timothy 5:16, Col 3:18

Instruction:

Application:

Selah Moment~

Close this day with a time of prayer and reflection on God’s instructions to you regarding the various positions you hold as a member of your family, and extended family

Day 2

Now let's look at how a virtuous women functions in her household

Proverbs 31:27 *"She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness."*

The word in the Hebrew for "watches over" is *tsaphab* and means to: *look out or about, spy, keep watch, and observe like a watchmen set upon a tower to survey the land with a wide view.*

1. What are some ways you can watch over your household? (don't think just physically, but also spiritually, emotionally, and mentally)

We are women of God, children of God who are to walk in the light as He is in the light. And as light bearers of Truth we must shine forth the truth of God's Word in word and deed. A faithful watchmen on the tower does not fall asleep because he is tired or walks away because he is bored. We are set in our families as "watchwomen" to look over the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of our families and keep watch for the enemy who would come to rob, kill, and destroy.

2. *"She watches over the ways of her household"* How does this verse counter our society's view of the individual and "the me first mentality"?

In last week's lesson we learned that a Virtuous Women was powerful, but did you know that in some references virtuous also means "War worthy"?! Virtuous watchwomen are equipped and war worthy for the battle!

3. We need to be wise and ready for battle when watching over our families. We also need to sound the alarm when there is an attack upon our family by calling out to God in prayer and calling on our brethren to pray with us in the battle.

What do the following verses say about being wise, being in a battle and sounding the alarm?

Psalm 111:10

Eph 6:10-13

Psalm 144:1

Numbers 10:9

4. From these verses which ones touched your heart the most? Which verses do you need to stand on right now in your life?

Remember God's Word is Your sword to fight back the enemy in defense and deter the devourer through an effective offense! As watchwomen we not only stand on the wall lookout but watching involves action through the Word of God and prayer. So write these verses down, keep them with you, and pray these over your family as you watch over them, and watch our mighty Lord bring you strength and salvation in the day of battle!

Now let's look at the other half of Prov. 31:27 *"...And does not eat the bread of idleness."*

Another word for idleness which is familiar to all is—laziness!

5. Write out the following verses below and underline the effects of laziness in each verse.

Proverbs 15:19-

Proverbs 18:9-

Proverbs 21:25-

Ecclesiastes 10:18-

Now look back at the words you underlined and write them out in row.

These are just some of the things one sows and brings into her family with laziness. Such things as thorns, destroyer, kills, decays, leaks, we want none of that for our family, so we must be dutiful and faithful watchwomen over our families and not be tempted by laziness.

6. What are some ways we become lazy regarding our families?

A Selah Moment~

Whether married or not, maybe there has been some areas where you have been slacking and less attentive than you should be. Maybe you have seen the signs of warning and have not acted on it. Take this time now to go before the Lord Jesus in prayer and ask Him to reveal to you things in your life and household that you need to watch out for, things that you need to go to battle for, and things that need wisdom in the handling of. Your Father in heaven loves and welcomes you in; remember He delights to give you counsel and He strengthens the hands that are weak and makes firm the feeble knees. Make sure to wait and listen for God and then write down what He shows and how you might apply it to your life.

Day 3- The Trinity - God's perfect model for relationships in the family

Please begin this time with prayer and ask the Lord to prepare your heart to receive all that He desires to show through this study.

God is one in essence and yet He is composed of three distinct persons, The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The persons of the Godhead demonstrate to us unity and uniqueness simultaneously. And by their example they show us how we as a part of a family can also be simultaneously an individual person who is one in unity with their family. Just as distinction and harmony coexist in the Trinity, so should it be among our family members. We see that in John 10:30 – “I and My Father are one” and in John 10:38- “Father *is* in Me, and I in Him” and by this we see that The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one and indwell together. The word “indwell” is defined to be within somebody or something, to abide, inhabit, infuse, or abide within a person, community, or place. To have harmony and oneness in our family, like in the Trinity, we must first have harmony by abiding in Christ.

1. Look up 1 John 3:24 for a description of abiding and write it out here:

God has given us an example for us to follow through the Trinity and empowers us to do so as we abide in Christ. Now let's explore how God intended a family to function and how a virtuous women can work in her family. Open your Bible to Prov. 31: 11-12

"...So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life."

2. We see that this women does "good and not evil" and because of that her husband and also implied her family, "have no lack of gain" (v.15, 21, 28). So what is good? What does it mean to do good specifically?

Covenant Love

Now let's consider again the example of the Trinity whose the working of unconditional love, grace, empowerment, and intimacy is demonstrated through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit's relationship as they love and serve one another. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit collectively and individually work in our lives to accomplish the same kind of relationship with us and with our family. We see...

The Father is a parent to us, relating to us as His children, as we see demonstrated through His interaction with the children of Israel. We see that in the Father's dealings with His children that he is loving, patient, kind, compassionate, long suffering, giving, ever-pursuing, respectful, nurturing, knowing, merciful and forgiving.

The Son, Jesus the Christ is our Groom who loved us and gave Himself for us, the Church who is His bride. The Son wishes His Bride and gives her robes of righteousness, that are His own.

The Holy Spirit indwells us and is a sign of our adoption into the Kingdom of God, who seals us as joint heirs with Christ, and empowers us to do all things in the Lord, as brothers and sisters in Christ. The Holy Spirit comes alongside us and testifies of Jesus to us, showing us His ways as we walk through life.

The word covenant in the Hebrew, is *b'rit*, which means to cut, make a pledge, and form an alliance of friendship and commitment, and to make a divine decree with signs or pledges. God has made His decree with a sign through the cross of Calvary; He has pledge an alliance of friendship and commitment for all who believe. God chose you before the foundation of the world and not by any merit of your own and He made a covenant with you to save you and make you His own.

3. How does 2 Thes 2:13 say about when and what God chose you for?

At the core of Covenant commitment is unconditional love.

God has built His relationship with us upon covenant. What do the following verses reveal about God's covenant with man:

Genesis 17:7

Ezekiel 37:26

Jeremiah 32:40

Hebrews 13:20-21

Covenant: To Love and Be loved

Family is where you are ought to be loved unconditionally and where one has the full assurance to be loved even when it is not deserved! We see in the gospels that Jesus welcomes the disenfranchised, the outcasts,

the sinner, the children, the women, and the common man to come and enter into an intimate, close connection with Him and thereby the Father. We see the Holy Spirit come alongside the believer and be a helper who guides, and comforts and even translate our groaning into prayers, and aides us to pray when we don't know what to pray, to strength us and act on our behalf.

4. How has God demonstrated to us that kind of love, a love we did not deserve? *Use Scripture to support your answer*

Covenant is more than just a contract that says “You do such and such, and in return I will do this...” but it is an unconditional commitment. What does Hebrews 13:5b say about God’s commitment to the believer?

Here are seven points to remember regarding God’s covenant between us and Him that show us...

5. Optional: Find a scripture to support each point and write it next to it.

- 1) The basis of relationship is unconditional love.
- 2) Communication and fellowship is essential.
- 3) Conflict, as well as harmony, is part of relationship.
- 4) Living in covenant means a willingness to forgive and be forgiven.
- 5) Living in covenant means being bonded to one another.
- 6) Living in covenant means accepting laws to give order and guide relationship.
- 7) Living in covenant means to acknowledge the past but live in the present, and look forward to the future.

Selah Moment~

Now after we have studied about God’s covenant and commitment to us, how can our verse “*She does him good and not evil all the days of her life*” be a covenant that we make between ourselves and our family? How does unconditional love and commitment factor in? Take this time to pray and write the proclamation of your covenant here, just as the Lord did for you.

Day 4 - Grace: To Forgive and Be Forgiven

Grace, which means unmerited favor, is connected with Covenant and is in fact part of the very fabric of covenant as God has graciously manifest His unconditional love to us through the covenantal promise we have in Jesus Christ.

As grace applies to our family life, God desires to establish “paths of grace” for us to follow so our family will be strengthen. These “paths of grace” are found in forgiveness and are grounded in mercy and compassion. The “paths of grace” are designed to ease hardship and diffuse situations that undermine the family, so let us walk in the pathway God has set before us by exercising grace through mercy and love.

1 a. What do these verses say about grace?

Ephesians 2:8

Ephesians 4:7

2 Cor 12 :9

b. What do these verses say about mercy and compassion?

Psalms 86:15

Psalms 103:8

Nehemiah 9:31

Zechariah 7:9

1 Peter 3:8

c. What do these verses say about forgiveness?

Psalms 103:2-4

Matthew 18:34-35

Mark 11:25

2. In light of all these verses how do you think this should affect how we demonstrate grace, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness?

Our relationship with God is governed by grace and not law, for it is by grace that we have been saved. Our family relationships are designed to be the same and meant to be lived out in a spirit of grace, not law.

3. Look up John 1:16-17, what does it say about law and grace?

A family life that is founded by law alone is operating by way of contract, i.e. “if you do this then I will do that” rather than by way of the covenant grace which says, “I love you unconditionally and forgive you when you fall short.” Law leads to legalism and but grace offers freedom and in that surrounding family members learn consideration for one another and lovingly act responsibly towards one another.

4. How does legalism lend itself to unforgiveness and a lack of mercy in our families?

When Jesus came and took on human flesh this was the ultimate act of God’s grace and love to us. Jesus came to reconcile us to God through an act of perfect love and forgiveness on the cross. Through Jesus and His sacrifice we find the basis for our love and forgiveness. We forgive because we are forgiven, and we love

because he first loved us. Jesus gave us the capacity to love others through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to love as He loves us—unconditionally.

5. How do these verses affirm God's love and our ability to love?

Romans 5:5

1 John 3:16

1 John 4:7

Galatians 5:22-23

Although family relationships are to operate from a spirit of grace and not law that does not mean that there is no place for law in the family. Just as there needs to be governing rules for the life of believer there must also be for the life of the family. The family living in grace is willing to accept structure, rules, and responsibilities to establish a stable environment and achieve productivity so that the family member's needs are met and their lives enhanced. Jesus gave us commandments and structure to follow so that we would know how to abide in Him, walk in His ways, have order in our lives, and give testimony to others that we are of Him.

6. Read the following passage in John 14:20-23. According to Jesus in verse 21, what is the correlation between love for Jesus and keeping His Word?

a. What is the outcome for those who do?

b. Verse 23 fill in the blanks: Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone _____ Me, he will _____ My _____; and My Father will _____ him, and We will _____ to him and make Our _____ with him.

c. Knowing that God makes His home with us when we love Him by keeping His word, how does this reflect how we should make our homes with our families?

d. Should we also have "commandments" or rules of conduct for our household?

7. Look up Deuteronomy 4:40 & 28:9. What is God's intention for giving His people commandments and what is the outcome for those who keep them?

John 13:34-35 *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

Rules and law are never to be used to repress needs, oppress lives, and form a demand for excellence without error, because it sets up for frustration and failure. Just as Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes; so we exercise grace in our expectations and set rules for safety and benefit, not for lording over. We as humans are limited and fallen we cannot fulfill the law flawlessly—we need grace. In a family based on law, strict faultlessness is demanded to follow the rules, this kind of pressure for perfection produces unnecessary guilt and causes family members to hide from one

another out of shame of failure. In this type of atmosphere, grace is not shown or taught, and is inconceivable to those who are held this expected perfection; and since there is no room for error, they are not able to forgive, nor be forgiven. What a vicious cycle!

8. As virtuous women who are new creations in Christ Jesus (2Cor 5:17). How can we change a circumstance of law into a circumstance of grace? How do forgiveness, mercy and compassion play a part?

In our family we need order but we need grace to be the overriding factor. Grace doesn't mean not enforcing rules or disciplining when need be, for just as God will not be mocked "a man shall reap what he sows" so too are we to set rules and consequences. But when consequences are enforced, we are to do it in a spirit of grace. Rules are set for protection and blessing. From the above verses we see that God's intention was always good when giving us rules to follow in our life and we know that He is faithful and just to forgive us when we confess our sins to Him, how much more grace we are to show to our own family.

10. As a Virtuous women how should this influence your own making and enforcement of rules in our families?

Selah Moment~

Forgiveness brings renewal, new life, new chances...HOPE! Close this time in prayer regarding all that you have learned and let the Lord speak to you now. Write down what He shows you here.

Day 5

Empowerment: To serve and Be served

Empowerment is an "active and intentional process of helping another person to become empowered". A person who is empowered has been fitted, strengthened, emboldened, built up, and matured by the encouraging support of another. We as virtuous women are to help our family members reach their full potential as children of God by operating in a spirit of edification that encourages and guides, we help to empower our family members to live for Christ. Empowerment never involves control, force or coercion! Instead it is a reciprocal relationship that is respectful and mutually enhances one another.

1. Use a dictionary to define the word edify:

We see then covenant and grace come together to be commitment and acceptance and empowerment is the result of those things through the power of God's Holy Spirit. Our active role is to work with the Holy Spirit to encourage, exhort, and edify our family members, instead of criticize, tear down, and discourage them by judging them too harshly or setting standards they cannot meet. In Proverbs 14:1 it says that, "*The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish pulls it down with her hands.*" The word "house" in this verse is *bayith*, which we learned about on Day 1, remember it is referring to our family or household.

2. What are some ways that we tear down our family? How does pride, frustration, and impatience play a role?

3.. What does Colossians 3:21 say regarding dealing with your children?

a. What does the word "provoke" mean?

Even in failure grace must be present as we lovingly turn an error into a learning experience and we exercise the act of empowerment by encouraging and supporting one another. The Holy Spirit empowers us to encourage and build up others and when a family is edifying one another a fountain head of love, humility, and servitude is the result.

4. As virtuous women, what are some ways we can spiritual, emotionally, and practically build up our family?

When parenting, to empower your children does not mean you relinquish the God given authority you have over your children but rather it is an exercise of power that builds up rather than tears down while responsibly caring for your children's social, physical, psychological, and spiritual development. This kind of love is empowering and brings freedom and a sense of belonging. The result will be unity and interdependency in the family that strengthens the individual and fortifies the bonds of the family.

Remember it is all about living according to God's intended purpose, which is life and life more abundantly!

Intimacy: To know and be known

We see throughout the Bible how God wants to know us intimately, and to be known intimately.

Through prayer we can share with God our deepest thoughts, fears, and feelings. As the deep cries out to deep, so God hears our cries and desires for us to hear the depths of His heart of love through His Word. He searches the deep places of our soul and knows the depths of our need more than we do. He is our Creator, Father, Friend and Lover, who loves us with an everlasting love. In every area of our being and our life He knows and is there, and although He knows all, He waits for us to surrender all to Him. The Lord is a gentleman who respects you and lovingly urges you to surrender to Him openly and honestly. To be transparent is a difficult thing and the fear of rejection makes us hide behind the masks of "everything is fine" and "I'm okay" when really we are not and we need to be open with God.

1. What is holding you back from being open with God today? Is it fear, pride, apathy, busyness?

2. What promises are held in the following verses concerning coming to God openly?

James 4:10

Hebrews 4:15-16

Just as we have need to be open with God, so too is our need to be open with one another in our family relationships. Often times we put on masks in front of one another to defend against: judgment and shame, fear of unworthiness, and rejection. The dread of unworthiness causes us to not be forth coming about our feelings; when we do this, we build walls between God and our family members.

3. What does Psalm 51:6 say about what the Lord desires regarding the deep places in our life?

a. How does God's *desire for truth in our inward parts* relate to being honest with ourselves?

b. How does *truth in the inward parts* relate to being transparent before Him and our families?

When Jesus came to be a ransom for many, He held nothing back and gave Himself entirely for us on the cross. He was poured out like a drink offering as His blood was shed to cover our sins. He emptied Himself for us.

4. In light of how the Lord Jesus emptied Himself for us, how then are we to be in our relationship with the Lord and with our families? How are some ways we can pour out ourselves as an offering for our families and not hold back? What does that kind of submission look like?

a. What are some ways we hold back from our families?

To be submissive and loving in relationships means we must be willing to give up some of our needs, desires, and even fears so that we may allow our family in behind the mask! When we do this it will strengthen and inspire others to follow suit. When the essentials of covenantal love, grace, and empowerment are infused with humility by being transparent, then the doorway is opened to effective communication to confidently express ourselves without fear of rejection or condemnation. In this atmosphere of unconditional love, grace, acceptance, and encouragement we are to make concentrated efforts to listen, understand, value and confirm individuality. How does God show that He does that for us?

5. Read Jeremiah 29:11-13 How does God thinking about you and listening to you show you that He recognizes you as an individual and values you?

The capacity to openly communicate is dependent upon trust and commitment and in such a place family members are not afraid to be open and share. In being transparent with one another, the family can come together on the common ground of honesty and humility and there you find joy, mutual blessing and satisfaction. All this brings us back to the foundation of the family which is based on the covenant of the unconditional love of God.

6. What does 1 John 4:18 say about love and how is this related to the unconditional love, trust and commitment of God?

A Finale Selah~We see that family is a structure made by God to provide for us a place of unconditional love, grace, acceptance, belonging, empowerment and intimacy. Our family should be a place where we serve one another in love and respect. The body of Christ has many members which have different functions that work together for the good of the whole body, so it is in our families. As virtuous women we must follow God's plan for our families as we obey the things we learn from His Word regarding families. Take time now to reflect on these things we have covered this week in a time of prayer and make sure to take the time listen and record what God is speaking to you.