

I. Introduction to Mother's Day and Proverbs 31

We have been coming through and will be back into that next week as we have been laying out the Bible for you as far as the keys of putting it all together, working through our Genesis and then moving on into the book of Exodus. But I want to talk to you this morning, as today is Mother's Day. You know me, I'm not much for preaching themed Sundays, but yet at the same time, there are so many things that we want to look at today that I think need to be said, and Mother's Day is a great opportunity.

I talked to a pastor friend of mine last night, and he told me that out of all the days—and I was kind of surprised to hear this—he said out of all the days of the year he got to preach, he just dreaded preaching Mother's Day. And I said, "Well, why is that?" And he said, "Well," he says, "because it's a day you got to stroke all the moms." And I said, and he said, "No, Father's Day you can get up and you can preach, you know, and just let them have it." And he says, "But Mother's Day," he says, "it's kind of a deal where you can't really say anything derogatory because it's Mother's Day, so you got to kind of..." He said, "I just..." And I thought to myself, "Well, you know, I guess he's used to his own." But bottom line is, guys, none of us would be here this morning if it wasn't for our mothers. And I don't know, Mother's Day to me is always a great time. And you know me, I'll whack the mother just like I do the guys, I don't care. But it's a thing where—I'm not going to do that today—but I want to talk to you about a chapter in Proverbs that is probably the greatest chapter that really is a text. If there ever was a Bible text for Mother's Day, I guess it would be Proverbs chapter 31.

You know what I found out? I found out that most children, no matter how good or how bad their mother has been in life—and there's no, you know, mothers, there are good mothers and then there are bad mothers and then there are mothers that are in between—but you know what? I've never found that no matter how bad a situation is that children don't love and respect their mother because she's their mother. And I think that mothers have a profound influence on any nation. And when this country was a praying country, let me tell you something, the great men of God that God raised up were raised up, many of them, because of praying mothers and grandmothers. The power of a mother in the Bible is absolutely incredible.

II. The Wisdom Books and the Book of Proverbs

You know, when I come to the book of Proverbs, I look at the book of Proverbs as just like one of the wisdom books. There are five wisdom books in your Bible. And these five wisdom books—I don't know if you know this or not, we'll get through it as we come through the whole study of the Bible as we're doing—but these five wisdom books really give you the complete character and makeup of the Godhead. They show you every aspect you ever wanted to know about God, the Holy Spirit of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and all of the things that go along with it.

➤ The Heart of God: Psalms

- The Sufferings of God: Job
- The Mind of the Holy Spirit: Ecclesiastes
- The Mind of Christ: Song of Solomon
- The Mind of God: Proverbs

The book of Proverbs is about two men: a wise man and a foolish man. The wise man is a man who finds the principles of God and then applies them to his life and becomes successful. The foolish man is a picture of a man who does his own thing. He neglects the teachings of God and he winds up being a fool.

The book of Proverbs is about two women. It's about a worldly woman, a woman. And it's about a virtuous woman. The worldly woman is like the foolish man, is a woman that is devoid of understanding and wisdom. She has no concept of anything with God. And therefore she plays into the world system. The virtuous woman, ah, that's what we want to talk about this morning. The virtuous woman is a picture of not only every godly mom that's on the face of this planet, but it's also a picture of your life and my life as a child of God.

We saw in the book of Song of Solomon just a couple of short weeks ago as we were finishing up our marriage class. I showed you how that Solomon had a thousand wives and he's looking through those thousand wives to find one with virtue. And he searches through all one thousand of them. Finally he finds one. You know what the book of Proverbs is? Book of Proverbs is an addendum to the Song of Solomon. It shows you what he is looking for in that woman. Song of Solomon is the book that talks about the fact that he found her. But when you come to the book of Proverbs you find what he's looking for that he was looking for in her to find her.

You see we think that true beauty is on the outside and that's an assumption that we all take. Bible tells us when God looks for somebody, man or woman, the Bible says that man looks on the outward appearance, you see, but God looks on the heart. God looks on the inside. And that is so true because we as human beings we always think of beauty as being outward. You're going to find that's true in the Bible. Some of the biggest mistakes that men made in the Bible were looking at the outside instead of looking at the inside. And we're going to talk about that in a little bit.

III. Structure and Application of Proverbs

Now I told you how we're laying out our Bible. I told you that the Bible has three applications to it. It has a historical application. It has a doctrinal application and it has an inspirational application or practical application. And I told you how that thing lays itself out. Now let me give you that just for your little records here of your putting through there. All right.

Historically, the book of Proverbs is kind of laid out like this.

- Chapters 1-7: Personal Instruction

- Chapters 8-30: Issues of Life
- Chapter 31: The Finished Product

That virtuous woman is a picture of your mother. It's a picture of any mother that does what's right with the Word of God, and it's also a picture of your life and my life. Because historically, when Solomon writes to his son, he's writing to Rehoboam. Rehoboam is the son of Solomon who doesn't heed the lessons of his father. Rehoboam is a foolish man and he destroys the nation of Israel. So historically, he's talking to Rehoboam. Doctrinally, he's talking to the nation of Israel. "My son" will be the nation of Israel that has is either going to forsake the wise and the foolish or they're going to do what's right, and you know how that plays it out. But inspirationally, it's you and I, and I want to take it from that aspect this morning on Mother's Day, and I'm keeping with our laying out the Word of God.

You know, I want to walk you through this and I want to show you some things that'll be a benefit, and you'll probably appreciate your mother more today because whether your mother's been a perfect mother or not, I promise you, in your life she has made a lot of sacrifices for you to be whatever you are today. Most of us don't realize that. Most of us realize that too late in life, and unfortunately, many young men and young ladies never recognize it, and that's a tragedy, but it's so true. It is so true. So what we're going to do, we're going to begin to come through this great chapter here. I'm going to read it and we're going to talk about some things that will help you.

IV. The Study of Virtue

I look at Proverbs 31 as a study of virtue. She's called the virtuous woman. We talked about this several weeks ago. Most Christians don't know what virtue is. They don't, if you would ask them the definition of virtue, they wouldn't know what it is. They wouldn't have a clue what it is. Virtue is the goodness that you and I have in us from God that we display on somebody else.

You find it with Jesus when the woman that couldn't get to Him, she just reached through the crowd and she had a disease and she touched the hem of His garment, and the Bible says that moment instantly she was healed. And the Bible says that Jesus knew that virtue went out of Him. The best way I can explain that, if you've ever dealt with a heavy day of dealing with people and situations and laying out the Bible, maybe just teaching the Bible, but you go through a day where you have four or five different sessions where you work with people through different various circumstances of life. At the end of the day, you're basically mentally drained. You know why? Because you take so much in the Bible yourself, but then you have to give it out, and when you give it all out, that's virtue that's gone out of you.

I didn't give them anything that I had. If I gave you what I had, we'd be out in a bar someplace and we'd get drunk together and solve it that way. I didn't give you what I had. I give you what God gave me, and God uses you as a conduit to give virtue to people who need it, and that's something that every child of God needs to understand. God wants you to be a conduit pipe to somebody else. First of all, your family, your wife, your husband, your children, and then as God

grows you to the point, then it goes from there. And you know that's why the Bible says that you are, you will be who you hang around. If you are a Christian and you hang out with the world, you're going to be a worldly Christian. If you're a Christian and you hang out with other Christian men or women, the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 27 that old phrase that iron sharpeneth iron, godly men sharpen each other's character. Why? Because they hold each other accountable with what they do and they help each other. That's what it's all about. So Proverbs chapter 31, it's a study in the character of virtue. It's a great study.

Now I'm going to read it for you and then we're going to make some comments here, and I know you all got plans today and we'll move on with it, but here's what it says.

Proverbs 31:10-31

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 is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.

She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.

Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

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.

Now Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You, we thank You today, Father, and Holy Spirit of God, we know that we'll receive nothing today unless it comes from You. Lord, we don't care anything about anything around here except Your Bible. Lord, our sole focus needs to be the Word of God and what it does in our hearts and our lives. And Lord, help us to see that even though this is a great Mother's Day text, and Lord, we can talk about the virtues of motherhood and all of the great things that mothers are, help us to see that as each individual Christian this morning, we are a bride to Christ. We are to Christ what Solomon was looking for so many years ago when he looked for one woman that he could put his faith and trust in. May God be able to trust us as well as we can trust Him. And we'll thank You and praise You this morning in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

V. The Rarity of Virtue and God's Trust

Now verse 10 starts out by simply saying this: "Who can find a virtuous woman?" If you want a good study sometime in the Bible, try to go through and enlist the women who would be in the category of being virtuous. There's not many of them. There's not many of them at all. It would, in fact, it would surprise you. I mean, you got Ruth, you got Hannah, you got the Shunammite woman back there in the Old Testament, and you got Mary, and you've got some great pictures of it. But I want to tell you, I mean, you got women through the Bible who didn't do what they needed to do and caused all kinds of problems, and the list is endless. You got Eve, you got Sarah, you got Job's wife, you got Michal, you know, who made fun of David and rubbed his nose in the fact that he was praising God. You got Rachel who caused all kinds of problems for Jacob, and you got Jezebel, you know, the old gal back in the Old Testament. You got Mrs. Herod, now she's a classic study. And then of course, you got Martha, you know, and Ananias and Sapphira his wife, you know, the list goes on.

There are not many virtuous women in the Bible, and yet in Solomon's day, the Bible says in Song of Solomon chapter 1 that Solomon, as I said, he had a thousand wives. You'll find that back there in 1 Kings 11:3. He had a thousand wives, and he's looking for one of them that has the virtue of God, and you know what? Out of 1,000, he found one. He found one, one out of a thousand. Now I know enough about my Bible to know that that's probably what in Christianity today, that's probably what you got. You know what the average pastor today, he cares nothing about the Word of God. He cares nothing about the things of God. He's in old Disneyland world right next to Michael Jackson at Fairyland or Neverland or Fairyland, probably closer, and it's that whole thing is all he, all they see is what they want for themselves and how you can pay for it. That's all they want. They care nothing about your soul. They care nothing about your spiritual problems. They care, and when you do go, they'll subcontract you out to somebody else. They just, it starts at the top and it goes right down from there. God's people are the same way. I promise you, across the board in Christianity, that you're going to find if you took every thousand

Christians and just divided them up in that number, you probably find one that was everything that God wanted to be.

Now I don't know where you're at this morning. I really don't. And every time I preach, you know how I lay the thing out. I know there's some of you here this morning that are just getting your feet wet in Christianity. I know there's some of you here this morning that you're starting just now to get it. So I'm not even preaching to you. You're in the process if you're going to learn it. But you'll know today when I'm done whether you fit into this thing or not. I don't have to put you in a category. I mean, the Holy Spirit of God, if you're saved, living inside you, will show you exactly where you're at today, and that's between you and the Lord. But I know this, he said one out of a thousand.

You know, back there in Ezekiel 22:30, there's a great study back there, and that study is, I call it, the day God, when God looks for a man. Bible says back there in Ezekiel 22:30 that God looked for a man that would stand in the gap to make up the hedge. You know what God was looking for back in Ezekiel's time, the same thing he was looking for back in Solomon's time, the same thing he was looking for today. He's looking for a man and looking for a woman that will come out of the world and take a stand for Christ to do what God wants him to do. He's looking for a man and a woman that will stand in the gap. You know what the gap is? In a battle, the gap is your worst enemy. It's where you win or lose battles. In some battles, it's your right flank, and other battles, it's your left flank. In the battles of Gettysburg, it was the center line that they were going to attack the center line because they saw the center line, they had dispersed their troops out and on the flanks, but they saw that the middle was a gap. So they charged that gap. The gap is where the weakest point where the devil will throw in the hordes to break that gap. And you know what God's looking for? He's looking for you and he's looking for me. He's looking for a man. He's looking for a woman that'll step in that gap and say, "Yes, sir, Lord, I'll hold the line." That's what he's looking for. Somebody to step in the gap. You know what? In Ezekiel's day, he didn't find any. Didn't find any. He says, "And I found none," because there wasn't any. There isn't any today. Not many. One in a thousand, I'd say. One in a thousand.

When you go back to Ezekiel chapter 22 and you tie it into the virtuous woman here, you'll find in that chapter the thing that he's looking for, that he's looking for a Christian with character. He's looking for a Christian with courage, and he's looking for a child of God with commitment. That's the three things this virtuous woman got going for. And you and I as a child of God, there's three things that you got to have and they're found in this chapter.

1. You got to have character.
2. You got to have courage.
3. You got to have commitment.

Now he says down there in verse 10, "Who can find a virtuous woman? her price is far above rubies." That's a great study. And I'm not going to spend a lot of time on all of this stuff because we've got a lot of stuff to go through here today. But I know this. I know when it says her price is far above rubies, I know what he's talking about. You know, over in Matthew 13:45, there's a story about a merchant man who goes to find, buy goodly pearls. And the Bible says that he finds

one pearl of great price and he sells all that he has to buy that pearl. You know who that pearl is? It's you and me. The church is likened to a pearl. You know what puts a pearl? We think diamonds are the most exotic or rubies or emeralds or sapphires. You know what the most absolute unique precious stone is? It's a pearl. You know why? Because a pearl is different from everything else in the precious stones market. You can take a diamond and if you're a craftsman, you can cut that diamond in half and you can come away with two diamonds. You can take a ruby and you'll cut that ruby in half and you'll come away with two perfect rubies. You can take a sapphire, cut it in half and come away. Every precious stone you can cut in half and come away with two perfect stones except a pearl. If you cut a pearl in half, both halves die. You see, a pearl is different from all the other precious stones because it's living. And when you cut it in half, both halves die. The pearl is a picture of a church. So when he says her price is far above rubies, I know exactly what he's talking about. She's a pearl. She's a pearl.

Then he goes on down here in Proverbs 31:11-12 and he says, "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." Hey, you know what the real issue is in your life and my life with God? I mean, let's just get it down to the bottom line. And all you young Christians, not even talking to you, not even talking to you, are you people that are just trying to find your way with God. This is no reference to you whatsoever, but learn from it. I'm talking to me this morning and I'm talking to you guys that have been around for a while this morning. You know what the number one issue is in your life and my life with God? Bottom line. We always reverse the issue. That's the way it always goes. We have a human nature trait about us that always takes anything that we are responsible for and want to put it on somebody else. That's the way we are. The real issue in life is how much can God trust you. That's it. It isn't any more complex than that. How much can God trust you with what God wants you to do with Him? It's as simple as that.

Trust is the bottom line fundamental foundation of any relationship. When it comes to your marriage, it's trust. When it comes to your relationship, it's trust. When it comes to the ministry, it's trust. When I look at young guys growing up in the ministry and wanting to preach and wanting to do this or wanting to do that. You know what I don't. When I look at our time as you grow in the Word of God, I look at it as a time where I have to prove myself to you and you have to prove yourself to me. And we both have to prove ourselves to God. You know how you do that? You do it by trust. I watch in the little things that people say they do or they do or say they're going to do, if they do it or not. Because that's where you learn, and the whole process of being close to God is God being able to trust you. You see it in the life of Abraham. Abraham started out, God couldn't trust him any farther than he could throw him. But it winds up by Genesis chapter 22 that God can trust him with his own son to put it on the altar and kill him if that's what God wants. Now that's a process of lesson in trust. And as you grow up, it's about can God trust you. In the ministry, it's about are you trustworthy with it? Do you take the ministry and do you hold the trust or do you blow it off like everything else you do in life? I watch what a person, you know what somebody says, "What do you look for?" I don't look for what a person does. I look for what a person starts and he finishes. I don't care what you do. When we start, when you start something, I want to see if you finish it. That's where you learn. See, everybody gets all excited about, "Oh, we're going to do this." How many finish? That's the key. See, that's

where it's at. We had people that started marriage class and you know, in the process, they bailed out of the thing. You know what? Only missed two or three, never made them up, and they get on with life. And then, you know, it all dies toward the end. Something new and more exciting comes into their lives. Something more exciting, something they got to do. "I got to do this. I got to do that. Oh, it's such a nice day. We got to do that." Hey, that's the bottom line. You see, when God's looking for somebody, God's looking for somebody he can trust with what he gives him. That's where you're at with it. That's where it's always been. God looked at Abraham and he says, "I know Abraham. I can trust him." And he did. Now we always turn the thing around. We say, "Well, I don't know if I can." You know what the answer? You know what everybody's answer is today of why they won't serve God? "Well, gee, I just don't know if I can trust him." Hey, pal, that's not the problem. The problem is not your ability to trust him. The problem, the problem is, can he trust us? That's the issue. I promise you, you can trust him. That's not the problem. But we always make the problem somebody else. That's not what we do. And I promise you, God wants to be able to trust you with what he gives you.

VI. The Virtuous Woman's Work and Provision

All right, Proverbs 31:13-15: "She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens." Now that's a great passage. Great passage. I want you to notice two things in here.

- Wool: A Picture of Salvation
- Flax: Righteousness and Promises

Now look at this. I told you before how the Bible always never violates its own principles. When he's coming down through this lady here, it says she seeketh wool first, then flax. You know why? I'll tell you why. Because there's no promise of salvation. There's no righteousness until first a sacrifice of a lamb has to be made. You and I couldn't get saved. We couldn't get the promises. We couldn't get the binding promises of the Word of God until the wool got covered first. That's how the Bible lays it out.

Bible says in Proverbs 31:13, "she worketh willingly with her hands." That's your attitude of heart. How willingly are you to be what God wants you to be? How willing are you to get into the Word of God and to do what you need to do?

Bible says in Proverbs 31:14, "She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar." She rises also while it is yet night and giveth meat to her household and a portion to her maidens. You see, she's like a merchant ship. She bringeth her food from afar. This woman feeds her family with supernatural food. It's the Word of God. And it came from afar place because Psalms 119:89 says, "Thy word is settled in heaven." This is a lot like Exodus 16 when the children of Israel were out there in the wilderness and they're journeying through all the wilderness. They have just left Egypt and now they're out there on the wilderness journey and there's nothing to eat. There's nothing to drink. There's nothing to sustain them. And it's a picture of your life and

my life once we get saved that nothing in this world is going to satisfy us anymore. So what does God do in Exodus chapter 16? You know what he does? He brings the manna from heaven. That manna is a picture of the supernatural Word of God which God brought down to feed you and I in our wilderness journey that we might sustain ourselves as we go through this world that has no sustaining effect on a child of God's life. That's what you got. She bringeth her food from afar. She feeds her family with the Word of God.

I like the next part of that verse. It says, "She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens." All right, let's look at the Word of Far Off. We know that that's the Word of God. Night, picture of the church age, Mark 13. Household. Notice she takes care of her own family first before she goes around feeding everybody else. Fourth thing, meat. Bible doctrine. You see the virtuous woman, you and me, any good godly mother follows that mindset of recognizing that she takes the Word of God. She's in a night time, the church age, and she feeds her family first. And then she gives a portion to the maidens and she makes sure she gives them meat. Bible doctrine. Teaching the Word of God and teaching the Word of God to men and women who want to learn the Word of God.

Now you can obviously see at this point how this fits into a mother on Mother's Day. And it's a great Mother's Day message. But I just don't want to preach to the moms today. I want everybody to see that in a spiritual sense you have brothers and sisters in Christ. There are going to be times when you're going to get a young Christian and the Bible talks about that the older women in the church need to be like mothers to the younger children. You need to teach them how to be good keepers at home, how to raise their children, how to do everything that needs to be done. By your example, that's an absolute necessity in any church. The men need to be looked at as fathers in the sense where you take younger men under your wing and you help them through the times in their life. Maybe they're going through problems. Maybe they just want to grow and learn. Whatever the case, you begin to take what you know about the Bible as a woman, as a mother to the younger women, as a father, as a man to the younger men and you begin to help them. You begin to nurture them and you do it exactly like it says in Proverbs chapter 31. You take the supernatural food that comes from afar. You take that and you feed them. And when you feed them you recognize that you take care of your own household first and then you give it to others and you teach them the Bible. You give them what the Bible says. And I'm telling you this is the job of not only a mom and a dad, it's also the job of every Christian.

VII. Buying the Field and Planting the Vineyard

And then Proverbs 31:16-17. Now this is where it gets real personal for me. So bear with me here as I lay this thing out because this to me is about as personal as it gets. I didn't quite understand this verse till about 10, 12, 13 years ago. Once I understood it, it changed my whole perspective. It may have been even 15 or 16 years ago. But once I saw it, I never looked at what I do the same way again, as far as the ministry is concerned.

Now Proverbs 31:16-17 says this: "She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms."

One of the greatest concepts you'll ever learn about the ministry, boys. And some of you young men, someplace down the line, I think probably God will use you in ministry. I know we're a young church. I know that we may not have a lot of time left before the Lord comes back. But if the Lord gives us time and carries His coming, I think that we've a good base here of young men that can really begin to do something for the Lord and in time, you know, God will take that where He wants it to go. But I want you to understand this. Proverbs 31:16 really is probably the greatest single thing you'll ever learn about the ministry. And it simply says this, "She considereth a field, and buyeth it."

You know Matthew 13:38 in one of the great parables in the book of Matthew talks about the Lord buying the field and it talks about the field is the world. And that's another key word you want for your Bible. In the Bible when you find the word field, you want to watch it because most times, not every time, but watch the context, most times it'll mean the world in a doctrinal inspirational application. My point is this, Matthew chapter 13 says, that Jesus Christ bought the world. Now I'm telling you, God never asked me to buy the world. He never did. In fact, if you look at the passage here, it says, I'm to buy a field, not the field. You see, God bought the world. We've got so many Christians and so many preachers that think that it's their personal responsibility to win the world to Christ. That's not my calling. My calling very basically is to find a field, a field. Now for me, that field is Kansas City. We lived in Canton, Ohio some 30 years ago, came to Kansas City. This has been my field for 30 years. I understand that my job as a pastor is not to go out and try to win the whole world. I'm to do whatever I can do. But the bottom line is where I spend my time, where I spend my energy, and what I've got to buy is a field. If every pastor in this town and every town across this country would just look at the field that he's got in front of him and understand that God never asked me to buy the whole world. God asked me to buy a piece of it. But ah, here comes the point. When I buy it, I may not buy the whole world and I may just bite off a chunk of it. But when I buy it, I pay the price just like he did. The price is the same, but the field is smaller. Your intensity and passion for the ministry of God needs to be superseded by absolutely nothing in your life. Now maybe you can't get there yet. I understand. I understand. It took me a number of years to get to that point in my life. But I'm telling you this. I'm telling you this. When God shows you what you are to buy, you buy it with everything you are. Notice I didn't say everything you got. This field you can't buy with what you got. This field you got to buy with what you are. And you give your time, your emotions, your passion, your energy. And you look at this thing just as Christ died on the cross and saw the world you see where God has given you. He just gave you and me a small piece of this gigantic planet. A small piece that this little church is to buy with the intensity and the passion that we take this thing and we do everything with it and we say to God, when it comes to Kansas City, have no fear. God, you can trust us. That's what we got to do. That's what I got to do. That's what you got to do.

And I'm telling you that says there, "with the fruit of her hand she planteth a vineyard." Hey, boys, you want to know how to build a church? All kinds of ways to do it. All kinds of ways to do it. And then there's one right way. The world, the Christian world will offer you everything in this world to show you how to do it except the way God tells you to do it. You see, he cleared it up. It doesn't even take somebody to understand theology. You don't even have to understand

anything other than just basic farming. You know how you get a vineyard? You know how you grow an apple orchard? If you don't have a lot of money, just plant one tree. That tree grows up. Those apples have seeds in it and in time you'll have 500 trees. You know how you build a church? You build it one person at a time. This mass evangelism crap is exactly what that is. Reaching the masses and trying to reach everybody and just have you got to build a church one tree at a time. The reason why they don't want to today because that takes work. That takes time. That takes getting involved. That takes sitting down and listening. That's just getting involved in somebody's life. We don't have time for that today. We're busy pastoring inanimate objects. And we don't have time for people in the ministry. We just want you to show up. We want you to give to us, but we don't have time to give to you.

You build a church, boys, one tree at a time. You get somebody and you'll win them to Christ and they'll get somebody else to come and say, "You want to hear a madman, come with me on Sunday." "You want to hear some of the most off the wall stuff? It's true, but you want to hear some wild, whacked out stuff, come Thursday night." You start with one tree. That tree grows up, drops its seeds, grows another tree. You go to work and you say, "Hey, come to marriage counseling." You go, "Hey, you want to play softball?" It starts with me as the pastor taking time one tree at a time. That has to be my job. It can never be anything else. I don't care what color the chairs are. I don't care what kind of wallpaper we have. I don't care how we decorate the place. It could be a, it could be a Walmart warehouse as far as I'm concerned. The only important thing in it are the trees and this vineyard. And you do it by the work of your hands.

Now, you know, if you've done any farming, especially in Missouri, you got three things you got to watch out for in Missouri. When you start to dig and till land, you got three things. You know what the first thing is? Rocks. We dug a latrine one time down in, John, down in Warsaw, Missouri. It took me four days to dig a latrine. The old boy came up and I hate old farmers that know everything about life. He'd say, "Yeah, down here, you take out one rock, five more come to the funeral." Yep. He's right. Rocks everywhere. I don't know where this was in the prehistoric age, but boy, we got a lot of rocks. Hey, you know what? When you start to clear a field to plant something, you're going to have rocks. Rocks are obstacles. Rocks are things you're going to have to plant in a garden. If you ever did any gardening, it isn't easy. We think it is quite like Johnny Appleseed, you know, and throw the seeds down and it doesn't work that way. You got to till the ground. You got to make sure it keep the weeds out. And I'm telling you, the three biggest things down in Warsaw, anyhow, or in Missouri, when you start to do some work, I'll tell you, first thing is rock. You know what the second thing are? Snakes. You know what the third things are? Scorpions. Now, there's a force moving its way up from Texas. Armadillos, but they haven't been around for a while, but now they're starting. I saw one killed on the road the other day, an Armadillo. I'm going to believe it. And I'm telling you, they represent the obstacles. You know the snakes and scorpions are the two things listed in the Bible that the Bible says Christ gave the church power over. You know, they represent the religious Pharisees and the scribes, and they represent the people who want to stop what you're doing and building a vineyard and planting trees. Oh, yeah. You ever know you kill one by cutting his tail off and you kill the other one by cutting his head off? There's a great theology lesson in that. One, you got to snip his tail off, and then he's harmless. The other one, you got to cut their heads off. It shows you how to deal with

different kinds of circumstances. Some circumstances, you cut their tail off, which I, it's my personal preference, by the way. Some of you got to cut their heads off. But he didn't just put that in there because he was thinking of something that he wanted to put in there. It means something. And when you see, I'm old school. I think you still, I think you build a church the same way you get it in the book of Acts. I think you start with people who want to do what's right, and then you invest your life in them, and you give them what they need, and you give them what they want, and you help them grow. And just like a tree growing up, I mean, you got acorns everywhere, you got apple seeds everywhere, pretty soon you got trees everywhere. That's the way it has to work. Learn that lesson. Never compromise to build anything for God. Never compromise anything to build something for God. I told you before, it's never right to do wrong to get the chance to do right. You do what's right from the beginning. You do what's right from the start.

And then Proverbs 31:17 says, "loins gird about with strength." That'll run you back to Ephesians chapter 6, which talks about the strength of any Christian, of any virtuous woman, is going to be your loins gird about with truth. The Word of God. The Word of God in your life.

VIII. Constant Work and Preparation for Winter

He says in Proverbs 31:18-20, "She perceiveth that her merchandise is good; her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands holdeth the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." You see, this is a great passage here. She knows what she has, see. You know what the problem most God's people? They're in church this morning with an open Bible and they have no clue what they got in their hand. Now that's not true, you guys. But I'm telling you, most Christians after, they don't see the Bible that they have as the absolute, pure Word of God. They don't see it like Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, where he says, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." That's where we're at. And I'm telling you, I'm telling you, this woman is always working. Her light is always on. You know what she understands? She understands a great lesson taught in Romans 14:7. You know why she has to always be careful that her light, that's your testimony, is always on? I'll tell you why, because she's understood what Romans 14:7 did. She says somebody's always watching your life, always watching your life. Bible says, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." There's somebody always watching your life. If they know you're a Christian, if you have made the statement that you believe in God, they are automatically going to hold you—I'm not saying it's right—but they are going to hold you to a higher accountability than they do everybody else. It's just the way it is. They're going to watch how you react or respond in any given situation. They're going to watch how you get angry. They're going to watch what you say when you do get angry, because no man liveth to himself. She understands that, so she never lets her candle go out. Never. Her testimony before God is the most important thing that she has.

Proverbs 31:21-22. Oh, another one. Boy. Proverbs 31:21: "She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are clothed with scarlet." "She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple." One of the greatest messages I ever heard in my life. In fact, I think it was probably the single message that I ever heard a guy preach that solidified in my mind this commitment of buying the field. I've taken that message and I have preached it only a few times. If I don't ever like to say I have favorite messages versus not favorite messages, but if I would have a favorite message that I like to preach, it's the message that comes out of here. You know what it's called? It's based on 2 Timothy 4:21. He says here, "She is not afraid of the snow for her household." You know what Paul said to Timothy? You know the last thing Paul said to Timothy? Now Paul gets his head cut off at the end of 2 Timothy. And at the end of 2 Timothy, he makes some requests. And he makes them to his son on the Lord, Timothy, who he had spent investing his life. And by the way, Timothy is going to take over after Paul dies. Paul knows that. And he makes one of the greatest statements that when I saw it and heard the message, it changed my life, impacted me that I was never the same again. And it's one little statement. And when you probably have read it a thousand times and it never clicked. I did till that man laid it out for me that day. You know when he said, he told Paul says to Timothy over there, he says, "Timothy, do thy diligence to come before winter."

You know what? We don't like to think it, but winter time is coming in all of our lives. And there are some things you better do before winter gets here. You know that an apple tree doesn't give apples in February. Have you ever noticed that? You notice up in the northern latitude states where we're at, that orange trees don't, pear trees, grapes don't give grapes, oranges, and fruit in January and February. And that Bible says in Psalms chapter 1 that your life and my life is like a tree, a fruit bearing tree that bringeth forth its fruit in its season. And I'm telling you, winter time is going to come in your family. Winter time is going to come in your life. Sometime, somewhere that sun is going to go behind the clouds. It's going to wake up and be a dark, dreary, cold day. The leaves are going to be off the trees. That old wind is going to howl down the street and it's going to be a cold, frigid day in your life. And if you haven't taken the time to make provision now, winter time is coming. Winter time is coming. That's one of the greatest things I ever saw in my life. I'm telling you something. I'm telling you. Some of you better get some things done for God before winter gets here. Your life is a season.

I'll tell you something else. There's some things that you better do and some things you better say before winter time comes. We're the great procrastinators. I had a young man one time years ago that he never got along with his dad. They both were Christians and they could never get along. And they just could never get along and never get the thing going. And they never, they both were very prideful and they just didn't want to back down from their pride to say I'm sorry. And the dad died. He died of a heart attack and I preached the funeral. And I'll never forget. I finished the funeral. You know how you go over and you shake hands with everybody and the funeral guy says, you know, you can go home now and go all over, you know, and everybody makes their way back to the thing. And I started walking back and they hadn't put that casket down the ground yet. I walked back over there, you know, started to go back up and everybody was talking to somebody and I just kind of took one glance back and that kid was standing there at that casket all by himself. Well, I'm not going to let him, it's a tough time. I'm going down with him. I

walked down up behind that kid. He was coming up behind him and I heard him say this, "Daddy, daddy, daddy, I'm sorry. Daddy, I love you. Daddy, I love you. Daddy, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, daddy. I'm sorry for what I said. I'm sorry for the times that I didn't say I was sorry. I'm sorry, daddy, that I never told you. Daddy, I'm sorry." I'm standing right there and now I don't know what to say. You know what I, you know what it says in my mind? No, I go through my mind. Wintertime. Wintertime. Some things you better do before winter comes.

Years ago around the turn of the century, an old farmer, hardworking guy. A lot like your own grandparents and moms and dads. Not like our generation. Hard worker. Had to scratch the ground to make a living out of it. Him and his wife, sweet woman. Going into town to get supplies and you know he's picking up the stuff. You know how those guys are, man. I mean, they're frugal. They don't buy nothing. They don't have to buy. I mean, it's, and she's over there and she walks over to the general store, you know, and she's looking at, and this lady ain't had a dress and knew anything new in 20 years, man. And she's looking at all this, you know, and all this stuff and she's looking at it, it's so beautiful, you know, and she's thinking herself, "Well, I could just get a little bit of this. I could make a nice dress and you know, I'd look nice from a husband and it would just make me feel so good." She asks you, you know, that's fine. That old woman, "We ain't got time for stuff like that, you know. We got to do this, we got to do that. We ain't got money for that kind of foolish stuff. Get the thing, you know, that's how it was, you know." So she gets in the little buggy, go down to the farm, you know. Got the fever about a month later. Died. The funeral, that old farmer just looked down there, boy, never said a word. People put his arm around him, never said a word. Pastor tried to come up, comfort him, never said a word. People were worried about him. One night in a rainstorm, terrible storm, some people got worried about him and I him being by himself and went out there to the place and he wasn't home. They got concerned. And they got all got called some neighbors and got together and they started walk checking out and they went down there to that cemetery where his wife was buried and there he was in the middle of the rain. You know what that old boy done? Marinap tombstone was yards and yards of yards of that linen. Wintertime. Wintertime. Some things you better say before winter gets here. There's some people you tell you love before winter gets here. There's some things you better do for God before the wintertime of your life shows in because winter's coming. Winter's coming. I'm telling you. That old Bible says down there she's not afraid of the snow for her household. She's made preparations because she worked while it was summer. She doesn't have to fear the winter. Let me tell you something, the greatest preparation for tomorrow, my friend, is what you do today. And I'm telling you, winter's coming. We're not going to escape it. It'll come in my life. It'll come in my family. It'll come in your family. It'll come in your life. And what you do now to prepare yourself for it will be the determining factor whether you get through the winter or not. And I'm telling you, winter's coming. Don't wait till you got to stand at that graveside to tell somebody you love them. Don't wait till you gotta put it on a casket to do something nice for somebody that you love and ought to be doing for right now. I'm telling you, wintertime is coming. "Do thy diligence to come before winter." I'm telling you. I'm telling you. We get the idea that lack of planning on our part necessitates an emergency on God's part when we need Him. Not true. Not true. But wintertime is coming. And I'm telling you, there's some things you better get done for winter shows up in

your life and there's some things that you better do right now to make sure that when that wintertime comes, you got all the basis coming.

IX. The Virtuous Woman's Influence and Legacy

Proverbs 31:23 says, "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land." Now in the Bible, the gate was the center of activity. It was like the square in our town today. When they had a citywide meeting, it was at the gate. The gate was the congregation place for everybody that was anybody. And the elders would sit around the gate and that's where you could pick up the latest gossip. That's where you could pick up all the information. If you had one direction to someplace, it was at the gate. That's where it happened. And when he says here, he says her husband is known in the gates when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

Let me ask you a question. When you're with other people, not church people, when you are at work and you're with other people and you're doing other things, who do people see in your life? Years ago in Ohio, I was working with a guy, really a guy that taught me the ministry. One time a young girl called him on the phone and said, "Can I come in and talk to your brother Mel?" And Mel said, "Yeah." She came in and I said, I started to excuse myself. She said, "No, no, Bob." She said, "It's fine." She said, "You can stay here. This is no big deal." She said, "I just wanted to tell you," she said, "you know, Mel," she said, and she'd been saved, godly girl, lovely girl. And she said, "You know what, Mel?" She says, "I went to church. I went to school yesterday." And she says, "I went in the restroom there in a break and I was fixing my hair." And some of the girls walked in and they know I'm a Christian. And they snidely said, "Well, good morning, Jesus." "And how's Jesus today?" "How are you, Jesus?" You know, and Mel started to, like I would have done, you know, I felt, what are you going to do? Well, you start to say, "Well, honey, you know what? That's just the way it is, you know, it's okay. You're doing what's right." And that's what he was getting ready to say. And she said, "No, no, no, no." She says, "I just wanted you to know." She says, "I was so glad that that's who they saw in me." Who do they see in you? Who do they see in me? See, that's the key. That's the key. When they talk at the water cooler, is it about your walk with God, good or bad? I mean, it's not going to be good. But I mean, when you talk bad about your walk, that's good. I mean, as long as it's good. But when you're with other people, do they see Christ in your life? Oh, who do they see? Who do they see?

Proverbs 31:24 says, "She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant." "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come." You know, I told you earlier that fine linen was the righteousness of the saints. And it says down here in Proverbs 31:25, that great verse, that she shall rejoice in a time to come. You know what that time is? That time, the judgment seat of Christ.

Let me, before I finish this up, let me read the rest of this here for you.

Proverbs 31:26-31

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.

What a great passage. You know what? I'm going to tell you something. This woman is a picture of you and for me. I mean, the Bible says, "Favour is deceitful, beauty is vain." As I said earlier, that's because the real beauty of this woman is on the outside, not on the inside. When it talks about there that her tongue, "in her tongue, is the law of kindness." That's the law of God found in James chapter 3 that covers and rules the tongue. You realize that every woman I mentioned to you when we started our lesson today, that was a non-virtuous woman. The thing that was her problem was her mouth. From Eve to Job's wife to Rebekah to Michal to Jezebel, every one of them had no rule over their own tongue, and that was the problem. And it's a picture of getting His mind and not your own.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 3:13, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it." And the Bible says, "Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates." At the judgment seat of Christ, you won't have to say a thing. You won't have to offer any defense. It'll all be laid out by what you've done with what God has called you to do. Proverbs chapter 31 is one of the most endearing chapters in all the Bible that shows you exactly what your life and my life should be in a non-threatening way. I didn't scream up and down and call a bunch of people a bunch of names and kick chairs over. I just took the Word of God and showed you from God's standpoint what it takes to be that virtuous woman. That's what it takes.

Listen, the Bible says she shall rejoice in a time to come. Life's tough right now as a child of God. I know that. Look, this whole life's a vale of tears. There's going to be some heartache. There's going to be some downtime. There's going to be some problems, but there's nothing that a child of God can't get through. In spite of it all, in spite of it all, Romans 8:18 says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." In that day. You know why? Because there's a time coming where it's going to all take care of itself. It's all going to take care of itself, and you and I will rejoice in a time to come.

You know what I'm happy about? I'm going to tell you something. I've had my tough times in life. I've had my struggles in life, just like you all have. I'm far from perfect. I still make mistakes, and my life is, you know, is a daily striving to be everything God wants me to be. And life hurts sometimes. It really does. I'd use a stronger word than that, but there are ladies here in this Mother's Day. But life can be tough, and you know it as well as I do, that you go through things just like everybody else does. But I want to tell you, and sometimes I think that the devil can play mind games with us, and we get to the point where we wonder if it's really worth what we got to go through to get to the other end of it. Let me tell you it is. Let me tell you it is. You

know what I'm glad? On my worst day, in my worst scenario, on my worst problematic day, let me tell you something. Here's what I comfort myself with in light of Proverbs chapter 31. You know what the truth of the matter is? Let me tell you something. For me as a saved man, this old world, with all of its filth and all of its ungodliness, and all of its strife, and all of its problems, is as close as I'm ever going to get to hell. And I got something else to tell you. For an unsaved man or woman here this morning, this old world is as close as you're ever going to get to heaven. And I'm telling you, she shall rejoice in a time to come. We sing that song. "Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ. One glimpse of his dear face. All sorrow will erase. So bravely run the race till we see Christ." Gotta stay in the race. You know how you stay in the race? You stay in the book. You know how you stay in the book? Get into Proverbs chapter 31. Develop the virtues. Develop your virtues. Take those points that I talked about today and go on home sometimes today and get on your knees and say, "God, make me that. Make me that. Make me. God, I want you to be able to trust me. I want God, you to be able to give me anything to do. Send me anywhere you want me to go. And I want you to rest secure that your heart can safely trust in me." That's a statement, man. That's a statement. But that's where it's at. The virtuous woman.

Every head bowed and every eye closed. Now let me just say this and we're going to be out of here in just a second. I appreciate you being here today and I hope the Word of God has opened itself up to you in a way that, you know, maybe it never did before.