

What is a Woman? The Marks of Biblical Womanhood, Part 3

Titus 2:3–5 and Selected Scriptures

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Introduction

Well, we return again this morning to our series within a series on biblical womanhood. At the beginning of the year, I decided to devote a series of sermons to confronting the lies that our present culture is most apt to peddle—lies which stand especially opposed to the foundational truths of the Christian worldview.

We spoke about the nature of the truth—how it is objective rather than subjective; rooted in the mind and character of God rather than in the cultures and societies of man; and revealed in God’s Word, the Bible, rather than in the emotions and experiences of human beings. We spoke about the nature of man—how we are creatures, created by God to be His image, and thus to be visible reflections of Him to the world. We spoke about how God created us as His image-bearers to be male and female—that contrary to the absurdity of transgenderism, gender is granted by the sovereign prerogative our Creator, is rooted in our biology, a gift of God that reveals our identity, and serves to highlight the goodness of our physical bodies as well as the glory of God’s design for humanity to glorify Him in our distinctiveness as male and female.

God intends to receive glory and honor and worship from the lives of His image-bearers according to their distinctive design as male and female. Men can only glorify God as men—by pressing into their masculinity and becoming more manly. Women can only glorify God as women—by pressing into their femininity and becoming more womanly. And precisely because of that, we must answer the questions: What does it mean to be a man? What is biblical masculinity? And what does it mean to be a woman? What is biblical femininity? If men ought to look and speak and behave like men and not women, and if women ought to look and speak and behave like women and not men, what does the Bible say men behave like? What does it say women behave like?

And so that has brought us to a series of sermons on biblical manhood and womanhood. And in my studies on the matter, I’ve found that the Scriptures reveal at least **nine marks** of each. Nine marks of biblical manhood, and nine marks of biblical womanhood. We worked through the marks of manhood over three sermons, which you can find on our website if you haven’t heard them. I’ll repeat those marks briefly: We found that the Scriptures teach that a man is a leader, a lover, a provider, and a protector. He is strong, sensible, dignified, sound in doctrine, and sound in speech. Then, we’ve turned to a series of sermons on nine marks of biblical womanhood. And we’ve spent two sermons on three marks, which I’ll review just briefly.

Review I. A Helper

The **first** of those **marks of biblical womanhood** was that the biblical woman is a **helper**. Genesis 2:18: “Then Yahweh God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a **helper** suitable for him.’” God’s design in creating the woman was to make him an equal and corresponding counterpart, who could help him to walk in obedience to the calling that God has placed on his life. She is designed to put herself at the disposal of another, yielding her gifts and strengths unto another’s benefit.

And we found that Scripture elsewhere calls this sort of helpfulness “**submission**.” A biblical woman submissively responds to the pattern of initiatives established by mature masculinity (Piper, *What’s the Difference?*, 49), in a way that honors and affirms—rather than usurps or challenges—his leadership. Two image-bearers, equal in status and dignity before God, but with distinct roles. Not as a product of the fall and the curse of sin, but God’s glorious, very-good design for men and women from the beginning of creation. The husband leads, and his wife responds to his leadership in helpful **submission**.

Review II: Beautifully Modest

Second, we learned that not only is the biblical woman a helper, but she is also **beautifully modest**. We saw that there is an appropriate sense in which **beauty** is proper or inherent to womanhood in a way that is not quite analogous to manhood. First Peter 3 speaks of a woman’s “imperishable beauty.” In 1 Timothy 2, Paul says, “I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing.” It’s right for a woman to prepare herself so that she is dressed in an appropriate, orderly, put-together, beautiful way. There is an appropriate beauty that a woman displays. There is a sense in which the woman is the beautiful gender, and thus an appropriate sense in which she presents herself as lovely. There’s something inherent to women that makes the pursuit of true beauty distinctly feminine.

But women are not only beautiful. They are beautifully **modest**. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2: “I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, *modestly and discreetly*, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.” When beauty is perverted by indiscretion and immodesty, it is corrupted into ugliness. We looked to Proverbs 11:22, which says, “As a ring of gold in a swine’s snout so is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion.” When a woman indiscreetly flaunts her beauty, she dishonors God, she acts contrary to her own womanhood, and she repels godly men, whom, the Scripture says, are attracted to the hidden person of the heart—the inner beauty that is chaste and respectful.

Review III: Quiet

And that led to our **third mark of biblical womanhood**—what the Scriptures say that inner beauty consists in. And that is, number three, that the biblical woman is **quiet**. She is marked by a beautiful, modest, quietness of spirit that complements her role as a helper. And though that’s a jarring thing to say in our contemporary climate, it is explicitly biblical. Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:11–12: “A woman must **quietly** receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain **quiet**.” He instructs women, in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, to “keep silent in the churches.” And 1 Peter 3:3–4 says, “Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable [beauty] of a gentle and **quiet** spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.”

Biblical women have a gentle spirit. They’re humble, and meek, and patient. They’re not pushy, or assertive, or demanding. They’re amiable, and not rough, or brusque, or abrasive. And they’re quiet. Calm, peaceful, and tranquil. A woman possessed of a quiet spirit carries herself so as to be a steadying influence on those around her, rather than someone who engenders conflict. She calms a room, rather than upsets it. She’s not emotionally turbulent, or boisterous, or contentious—not harsh, or abrasive, or loud. She’s peaceable, entreatable, and eager to forgive—more difficult to offend than to please. Biblical women are gentle and quiet. Their character, attitude, demeanor, and speech are marked by the inward, imperishable beauty of gentleness and quietness.

IV. A Homemaker

And that brings us to this morning: to a **fourth mark of biblical womanhood**—namely, that a biblical woman is a **homemaker**. Now, I know that, for some, that word tends to conjure images of the 1950s, and Mayberry, and a sort of sterilized “golden age” full of stereotypes—stereotypes that have often been manipulated into being demeaning to women. Things along the lines of: “A woman’s place is in the home”—as if she is somehow out of line if she were to have a meaningful existence outside the house!

But I don’t intend to carry over all the baggage that is associated with certain connotations of the word **homemaker**. Instead, I mean it more literally—more closely aligned with the denotative value of the word. A biblical woman is a *maker* of the *home*—the one who has the responsibility of directing all of her energy, creativity, love, and strength toward making the home a pleasant environment in which the needs of her family can be cared for, in which discipleship flourishes, in which hospitality is practiced, and in which the Lord Jesus Christ is honored according to His Word.

And I want to consider this reality of the **biblical woman** as a **homemaker** under two broad headings. And those are, number one: her **domain**; and number two: her **duty**. And we'll look to Scripture to instruct us on both of these.

A. Her Domain: A Worker at Home

In the first place, the biblical woman's responsibility as a homemaker speaks to her **domain**. This is the primary sphere of responsibility in which the Lord has placed the woman—the domain in which she is to direct her labors for the Lord's glory. And we see that from several passages. In the first place, consider Titus chapter 2. We've been to this passage several times in our series on manhood and womanhood. And in verses 3 through 5, Paul gives instruction concerning the conduct of older women. He says, in verse 3, that they are to be "teaching what is good, so that they may [train] the young women," verse 4, "to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, *workers at home*, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored."

And it's that phrase that gets translated "workers at home" that concerns us for our present point. Women are to be workers at home. The Greek word is *oikourgos*—used only here in the New Testament. But its meaning is clear from the two words that are joined together to make the compound word: *oikourgos* comes from *oikos*, which means "home," or "house," and *ergon*, which means "work." She is to be a home-worker, or a worker in the house. The leading Greek dictionary gives a definition that you would expect: it means to be carrying out household duties or responsibilities, to be busy at home (*BDAG*). When Paul instructs the older women in the church to disciple and train the younger women, he wants them to be trained to function well in their rightful domain—to be workers at home.

We see a similar emphasis in 1 Timothy chapter 5. In verses 9 to 15, Paul is instructing Timothy about how the church is to serve widows. These women, having lost their husbands, have also lost their primary means of financial security. Paul gives Timothy some guidelines for how the church can assess whether a widow's financial welfare is to be taken up by the generous support of her church family. And the principle seems to be that if a woman has lost her husband and is of an advanced age where she is not likely to remarry or to be able to care for a family, the church should step in and support her—so long as her character is consistent with godliness. But, if a widow is young enough to remarry and care for a family, she should pursue that course, in which her needs will be met by her new husband rather than the church.

And in that context, Paul says in 1 Timothy 5:14, "Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, *keep house*, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach." If your husband has died, if you're young enough: pursue marriage, have babies, and—the phrase that's important for our point in this verse—*keep house*. The term is *oikodespotein*—another

compound word, made up of the word *oikos*, “house,” and the verb *despoteō*, which, along with the cognate noun *despotēs*, is where we get the English term “despot.” A despot, in English, is one who rules. In Greek, a *despotēs* doesn’t bear that same connotation of tyranny or cruelty; it just means a *master*, a *lord*. It’s the term that’s used of the Lord God in several places throughout the Scriptures. The woman is to be a master of her home! She is to get married, have kids, and to manage a household.

Now, it’s true that the ultimate responsibility for “manag[ing] his own household well” falls to the husband, who is the spiritual leader of the home, 1 Timothy 3:4. But here we learn that the authority of the day-to-day management of the household is delegated from the husband to his wife, and she manages the household in subjection to his leadership. Titus 2:5 says the older women are to train the young women to be “workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands.” So, the work she does at home is subject to her husband’s leadership; it does not usurp it. Pastor John puts it this way: “The man provides the resources through his labor, and the woman manages them for the care of her husband and children” (*1 Timothy*, 213). This is her **domain**.

And while I think those two passages are sufficient to make the point, I want to turn to one more passage that illustrates this reality in a really exceptional way. And that is Genesis chapter 3. So many of our sermons in this series on the nature of humanity and the roles of men and women have involved us in the study of the opening chapters of Genesis, because it’s there, at the very beginning, that we learn about fundamental truths related to mankind’s nature, and our identity, and our proper functioning.

In Genesis 3, the sin of Adam and Eve brings God’s curse into the world—as He curses the serpent, the woman, the man, and the creation itself as punishment for mankind’s rebellion. But it’s exceptionally interesting that God curses the man and the woman distinctly, in ways that relate to each one’s proper domain and sphere of responsibility. In verses 17 to 19, God curses the man with respect to his vocation as a worker of the ground. He says, “Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground.” Adam’s natural, pre-fall domain was to engage in breadwinning labor. He was to work the ground in such a way that it would yield produce capable of feeding his family. The burden for such provision fell to him, ultimately. And therefore, as a punishment for Adam’s sin, God curses Adam within his natural domain as a man. The labor that would have been a pure delight and have brought only blessing will now be difficult, and wearisome, and tinged with a sense of futility.

Well, how does God’s curse come upon the woman? In verse 16, we see God curse the woman with respect to her domestic relationships. “To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply Your

pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children.” Then God says, “Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” And we spoke about this: the woman’s desire will be for her husband in the same way that sin’s desire was for Cain, in chapter 4 verse 7—namely, to rule over him. The woman is not cursed with the role of submission; that pre-dated the fall. No, she’s cursed with *discontent* with her role of submission, such that she desires to occupy her husband’s role and rule over him, in a way that will breed conflict.

And so what do we observe? One writer puts it this way: “In appointing the curse for his rebellious creatures God aims at the natural sphere of life peculiar to each” (Piper, *WTD*, 39). Another says, “God relates the effect of the curse respectively to that portion of His creation mandate (as already established in Genesis 1 and 2) that most particularly applies to the woman on the one hand and to the man on the other hand” (Knight, *RBMW*, 347). In other words, God’s curse identifies the man’s natural, pre-fall domain as working to sustain his family through *breadwinning* labor. And thus it also identifies the woman’s natural, pre-fall domain as working to sustain her family through *childbearing* and *nurturing* labor (Piper, *WTD*, 39–40)—to be a helper for her husband and to bear and rear children. Or, in other words: to be a worker at home.

This is the sphere of responsibility that the woman was created to be oriented to. This is her natural **domain**—the place in which God has wisely designed for her to flourish most, for her to be most fulfilled, for her gifts and talents to be put to the greatest use for achieving the ends her Creator and Lord has designed for her. It is her home-base, her ground zero for ministry, where she employs all her energy and creativity to make the home a place of rest, and encouragement, and support for her husband; a place of nurture, and safety, and fun for her children; a place of welcoming hospitality for the people of God; and a place of ministry to unbelieving neighbors.

Our unbelieving, Satanic, anti-Christ culture, through the so-called feminist movements of the 20th century, has succeeded in despoiling women of the glory of their God-given role of being masters-of-the-home. The feminist agenda has duped women into believing that being a **homemaker** is oppressive to them—that it strips them of their rights to have a meaningful existence outside the home like men do: meaning that’s derived from pursuing a career. “Keeping a clean and pleasant home, doing laundry, preparing meals—Don’t be a *slave* to your husband! No, pursue your self-worth in the working world, where you can be a slave to somebody else’s husband! where you can earn money, which you’ll need to pay someone else to raise your children! so the daycare workers and public school teachers can train and disciple your kids in the same *godless* worldview that managed to con you out of your birthright!” It would almost be funny if it weren’t so ridiculous.

But to my dear sisters in Christ: don’t be deceived! Don’t trade the glory of your God-given responsibility as a worker at home for the mess of pottage of the work-a-day world. And you say, “Glory? I change diapers and scrub floors! I break up fights between screaming children and

struggle to teach elementary education! I make meals that people complain about only to then have to clean a pile of dishes! Every day is the same! Where's the glory in that?" And I just want to plead with every Christian mother of young children that will listen to me: there is no more important work in the world than the work you do at home in raising your children to be faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I wish I had adequate words to express this. In the first place, children are hardwired by their Creator to seek from you, their mother, the nurturing care and the emotional affirmation that you are uniquely equipped by God to give them by being present in their lives, by being that consistent source of stability and encouragement and affection that a nurturer gives. Fathers ought to be affectionate with their children; and certainly children do need and seek affection from their fathers. But it's no accident that, in 1 Thessalonians 2, Paul compares his "exhorting and encouraging and imploring" the believers to the way "a father would [do with] his own children" (v. 11), and then compares his "fond affection" and nurturing care for the church to "a nursing mother [who] tenderly cares for her own children" (vv. 7–8). There's something manly about exhorting and encouraging and imploring. And there's something womanly about affectionate and tender care. And children need both. A child needs the nurturing affection of his *mother*, not his babysitter.

But even beyond just that emotional impact, there is no one in the world who exerts a greater influence on a child's life than that child's mother. The hours and hours of a mother's instruction, training, of modeling an example to follow are absolutely unparalleled. I recognize that my responsibility as the head of my household is to take a lead role in discipling my children, but it's the woman whom Paul calls the *oikodespotēs*, the master of the house. That's a mastery she exercises in subjection to her husband's authority, as we've seen. But simply by virtue of the time that a father spends working outside the home (to fulfill his God-given role as the primary provider), I recognize: no matter how many sermons I preach, I will not come close to having the impact on my children's day-to-day development as my wife does.

Moms, your kids learn the majority of the things they learn simply by watching you—by speaking and interacting with you. They learn what it looks like to live a life in submission to Jesus by watching *your* example. They learn the priority of prayer and Bible reading from seeing you make it a priority. They learn the value of diligence, hard work, contentment from watching you go about your duties with joy. They learn what it means to live with conviction, as they watch you put God's Word into practice. They learn about how a godly wife interacts with her husband, how she employs her home to extend hospitality, how she prioritizes the needs of the people of God in service and fellowship. And on and on we could go.

Paige Patterson served as President both of Southeastern and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, as well as President of the Southern Baptist Convention. His wife, Dorothy Patterson,

made this observation about her role as a mother: “No one—not teacher, preacher, or psychologist—has the same opportunity to mold minds, nurture bodies, and develop potential usefulness like a mother” (*RBMW*, 370). And she’s absolutely right. That’s why there has been such a bitter war in this country over the educational system. It’s why the teachers’ unions aim to exert so much authority, and why the public school systems want to have drag queen story hour in your elementary school library. It’s because everyone knows that as go the children, so goes the nation. To educate a society is to influence a society.

And so ladies: do you want to change the world? Raise your children as disciples of Jesus Christ. Raise children who know Scripture, who love and support the local church, who prioritize fellowship with the saints, who evangelize the lost, who conduct themselves according to the fruit of the Spirit, and, most importantly, who passionately pursue communion with Jesus. If you devote yourself to the ordinary, sometimes mundane, sometimes stressful and thankless duties of being a worker at home, you will shape the next generation of the church of Jesus Christ, and the citizens of this nation. You will literally be the most influential people on the planet.

Now, you ask, “Mike, are you saying that women are forbidden to work outside the home?” No, that’s not what I’m saying. But because of this emphasis Scripture puts on the home as a woman’s **domain**, that is to be her priority. The responsibilities that come with making and keeping a God-honoring home, serving as an encouragement to her husband, devoted to her children, as we’ve said—all of those responsibilities inside the home must be met before she would seek opportunities to work or serve outside the home. First things first. If, after first things are done, there’s time for second things, then by all means: enjoy second things. Working at a Christian ministry, like Grace to You or Children’s Hunger Fund, a school, a hospital, or even in a support role at the church—all of those are great things, so long as it doesn’t take you away from the work that Scripture prioritizes for you.

Many times that can be done after the children reach a certain age and the needs of the house aren’t as great. Often, a young mom can be industrious, like the Proverbs 31 woman was, who contributed to the family’s finances, Proverbs 31:24, by “mak[ing] linen garments and sell[ing] them,” or, verse 16, “she considers a field and buys it; from her earnings she plants a vineyard.” In other words, a woman is able to earn money while at home through some sort of business, while not taking her away from her primary responsibilities. But it is exceptionally rare that a mother of young children is able to meet all the demands of managing a God-glorifying home while also working outside the home. Being a faithful worker at home is demanding labor, often times more demanding than the work one does for a paycheck, which is why the Proverbs 31-woman, verse 17, “girds herself with strength and makes her arms strong.” There is an appropriate, feminine strength that a woman must cultivate for the work she’s called to do. And it’s the rare case when work outside the home doesn’t take her away from the duties of God-honoring homemaking.

And you say, “Ok, but what about the single woman?” Well, on the one hand, younger single ladies ought to aspire to get married to a godly man, to have children, and to manage a God-honoring household. But on the other hand, there are single women aspiring to marriage and motherhood, and the Lord in His providence has not yet seen fit to grant that gift. And before I go on, I do want to say that it is grieving to your pastors and leaders to know of many godly young women who desire almost nothing more than to honor God by fulfilling this role, but who are not pursued by godly men. If you’re a single man in Christ, hear this exhortation from the Lord to do what you must do, become what you must become, in order to be a godly husband to a godly young woman. There are so many women who buck against their God-ordained role as homemakers. What a shame for there to be so many in this church who long to embrace that role, but who are not able to walk in it due to a lack of discipline or initiative by the young men in the church. So: get after it, brothers.

But to those sisters to whom the Lord has not yet given this gift of family, yes, of course it’s biblically permissible for you to earn a living by working outside your home. And you ought to do your work heartily, unto the Lord. At the same time, while the Lord may not yet have given you a husband and children of your own, there is no doubt: He *has* given you *family*. He’s given you the brothers and sisters of your local church. He’s given you spiritual children, whom it is your responsibility to love, and care for, and serve, and sharpen, and disciple. And He intends for the *home* you dwell in—whether it’s a house or an apartment or whatever—He intends for your home to be an instrument of your service to your spiritual family: a place of hospitality, a place of refuge and safety for those who might be in danger or in need, a place where Bible studies are hosted, where meals are shared, where spiritual conversations take place, where prayer meetings are had.

And a home used in that way requires **homemaking**. It requires, as one single woman put it, “warm, comfortable, aesthetically pleasing surroundings” (Forbes, *RBMW*, xxvii). Which means that it still requires that you embrace the *home* as your **domain** as a woman. It still requires that you put into practice this command to be a worker at home.

B. Her Duty: To Love and to Nurture

Well, just as the biblical woman’s responsibility as a **homemaker** speaks to her domain, it also speaks to her **duty** within that domain. And so we come now, **secondly**, to her **duty**. And we find that in that same passage in Titus 2. We’ve discussed them briefly already. Titus 2 and verse 3: the older women are to be “teaching what is good, so that they may [train] the young women,” verse 4, “*to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home,*” and so on. And so, as the biblical woman orients herself to her God-given domain, the home, the focus within that domain is on love, because the life of devoted service that a godly woman is

called to in being a worker at home can only be fueled by love—by the affection for God in Christ that wells up into the action of benefiting those Christ has given us to serve. She is to love her husband, and love her children.

A godly woman who is a worker at home is to see to it that she loves her husband. In our series on biblical manhood we discovered that the husband is to exercise his headship in a loving manner—after the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ in His loving service of the Gospel. Ephesians 5:25: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” The biblical man is a lover, after the pattern of Christ. Well, here in Titus 2, we learn that the biblical woman is also a lover. And the pattern remains the same: it is Christ’s sacrificial service His people in spite of our ill-desert. So also, a wife’s love for her husband must be sacrificial and in spite of his not deserving it.

Pastor John comments about this love that is to be given from husbands to wives and wives to husbands. He writes, it “refers to willing, determined love that is not based on a husband’s worthiness but on God’s command and that is extended by a wife’s affectionate and obedient heart. Even unlovable, uncaring, unfaithful, and ungrateful husbands are to be loved. This sort of love of husbands and wives for each other involves unqualified devotedness and is a friendship that is strong and deep” (*Titus*, 83). Speaking from experience, I know what it is to be a husband who is unworthy of his wife’s love, and therefore I know how gracious of a gift it is to be loved in spite of that unworthiness, and how the display of such undeserved kindness from my wife is not only a powerful motivation for my love and service to her, but also a motivation for me to press harder after holiness in my own life—to stop doing those things that make it difficult to love me, and to start doing those things that might make it easier.

But the kind of love that Paul calls wives to here isn’t just gritted-teeth, clenched-fist sacrifice. Like, “I guess I just have to serve this ungodly mess of a man, because God told me to! Fine!” No, that’s not love. Ladies, the command to love your husbands is inclusive of *liking* your husbands (Mueller, 67). It’s not just about devoted service; it’s about genuine affection as well. I understand that your husband won’t always be likable, but you are commanded to cultivate an affection for him as his wife. And rather than nitpicking to find things to be discontented with, you’re to be diligent in spying out those evidences of God’s grace in his life, where he’s been making progress, for which you’re able to offer him encouragement, and in which you’re able to delight—so you actually *like* him.

That is not less than what Paul is commanding here. And certainly, such love from a wife to her husband will contribute to a happy home. A wife’s love is part of what “makes” her “home” the haven of rest and support and encouragement for her husband that it must be. But that love will also express itself in her diligence to “make” the “home” in all the other ways that that requires. Out of love for her husband, she will be diligent to keep a clean and orderly house, so that it truly

can be a place of rest and refreshment, rather than chaos and disorder. Out of love for her husband, she will be faithful to use her gifts to employ their home as a means of extending hospitality to others. And so on. Love is the engine for homemaking.

And in similar ways, a godly woman who is a worker at home is to see to it that she loves her children. We spoke earlier of how the Scripture presents the woman fundamentally as a nurturer. And there is no more natural of an expression of that nurturing disposition than in a mother's tender and affectionate care for her children. There is a unique softness that a child ought to find in his mother; she ought to conduct herself with him in a way that makes him always confident in her sympathy and protection. But more than that, Pastor John writes that a mother is to love her children "in every way—practical, physical, social, moral, and spiritual—with a love that has no conditions and no limits" (*Titus*, 85).

And I think the best illustration of that comes in Proverbs 31, so turn there with me. You all recognize this passage as Solomon's depiction of the standard of biblical womanhood. And we observe in these verses a picture of the duties of a godly woman, who loves her husband and her children, and is a worker at home.

First, look at verse 26: "She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue." This is an expression of spiritual and moral love for both her husband and her children. When she opens her mouth, she speaks what is consistent with the wisdom of the Word of God and the kindness that Scripture directs us to walk in. She is a counselor of her husband and a teacher of her children in the ways of the Lord.

Second, we see her love expressed in her diligence to contribute to the economic well-being of the family. We spoke about this briefly earlier. Verse 13 says, "She looks for wool and flax And works with her hands in delight." Verse 16 we read before: "She considers a field and buys it; from her earnings she plants a vineyard." And then verse 24: "She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies belts to the tradesmen." This speaks to the industriousness of the biblical woman. So far from the notion that "the husband works" and the wife "stays home," the wife is a *worker* at home. She summons all of her creativity and giftedness and finds ways to contribute to the financial well-being of the household. Now, she does not bear primary responsibility for that kind of provision; that falls on the shoulders of the husband. Nor does it mean that such endeavors take her away from her other household duties. But none of that means that she sits around watching soap operas or being a busybody on social media all day long. The biblical woman loves her husband and children by being a worker at home—even unto the economic blessing of the household.

Third, look at verse 15. It says, "She rises while it is still at night and gives food to her household and portions to her maidens." This means that the godly homemaker takes primary responsibility

for preparing the meals that the family will eat. It's the father's responsibility, as the primary provider, to earn enough money to be able to buy food. But Scripture seems to place primary responsibility on the mother for preparing healthy, nourishing meals to those she's responsible for. That is a way to love her husband and her children in a physical way—by providing for their physical needs.

Fourth, verses 21 and 22 speak of the homemaker's clothing of her loved ones. "She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet. She makes coverings for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple." The mother is responsible to clothe her household. Now, of course, that looks a lot different for families today than it would have looked in 1000 BC. Today it doesn't require weaving fabrics on a loom or washing clothes in the river. But I think a legitimate application is that the mom bears primary responsibility for keeping the children in clean, presentable, modest clothing. It doesn't mean Dad can't help out with the laundry, but that responsibility falls primarily to her.

And given all of that, the Proverbs 31-woman is strong. Verse 17: "She girds herself with strength and makes her arms strong." Verse 25: "Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future." Everything that we've just spoken about—all of that takes strength, stamina, fortitude. And we're told here that there is an appropriately feminine strength that the biblical homemaker is marked by. It does not look the same as the masculine strength that must mark the biblical man, but it is strength nonetheless. A woman may be the weaker vessel, as 1 Peter 3:7 says, but that does not mean she is to be *weak*. She is to cultivate the strength of character, mind, and body to be able to be a teacher and a counselor, to be a hard-worker who contributes, to be the one who cooks, and clothes, and manages the household.

Conclusion

And so it's no wonder that this section begins with the exclamation that the worth of such a woman is far above jewels (31:10). And that point is the first of two closing points of application. First, to those who struggle to believe that such a calling is indeed meaningful and significant, I want to assure you once again that it is. Dorothy Patterson, whom I quoted earlier, writes on this point "Homemaking—being a full-time wife and mother—is not a destructive drought of usefulness but an overflowing oasis of opportunity; it is not a dreary cell to contain one's talents and skills but a brilliant catalyst to channel creativity and energies into meaningful work; it is not a rope for binding one's productivity in the marketplace, but reins for guiding one's posterity in the home; it is not oppressive restraint of intellectual prowess for the community, but a release of wise instruction into your own household; it is not the bitter assignment of inferiority to your person, but the bright assurance of the ingenuity of God's plan for complementarity of the sexes, especially as worked out in God's plan for marriage; it is neither limitation of gifts available nor stinginess in distributing the benefits of those gifts, but

rather the multiplication of a mother's legacy to the generations to come and the generous bestowal of all God meant a mother to give to those He entrusted to her care" (*RBMW*, 377).

Another writer captures it quite helpfully when he says, "Every second of such a life matters to God. Doxology is in the details: a woman who sacrifices her own free time, her serious intellectual and vocational interests, and her goals to care for little children, make healthy and tasty meals for her loved ones, organize, manage, and clean a home, express support and love for her husband as he works hard to provide, and teach her progeny the word of God in all its fullness. Such an existence is more than a job conducted within the confines of a home; it is a vocation. It involves the full measure of a woman's gifts, abilities, and talents, and it is not a lesser call than a prestigious out-of-the-home career. In fact, such labor is in general terms far *more* demanding than paycheck-driven work, for the work of child raising and homemaking means the direct shaping of lives and even eternal destinies" (Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 158–59). No matter what the culture says, Mom: the ordinary work you're doing day in and day out as a **homemaker** is extraordinary in significance. Its importance cannot be overstated. And so, love and embrace that role for the honor that it is. And don't listen for a moment to this God-forsaken, apostate culture when they tell you any different.

And then a second word of application goes to those who struggle to believe that such a calling is attainable. We ended our last message here, and I think it's right that we end this one here as well: at the cross. Some of you hear Scripture's standard of biblical womanhood, and you're tempted to despair for how far short you fall of this calling. And in a sense, it's right for you to feel that way. This is a lifestyle that is impossible to achieve in the strength of your own willpower. It can only be attained by the working of the Holy Spirit of God Himself, who dwells in you through your faith in Christ, and who faithfully applies all the richness of spiritual blessings that Christ Himself purchased for you in His atoning death on the cross.

My dear sisters, if the Word brings conviction for your sinful failures, praise the Lord that the Lord Jesus came not for the righteous, but for sinners! Raise your eyes to Calvary's cross, where your Substitute bore every one of your failures in His own body, nailed them to the cross, and buried them in Joseph's tomb. "Behold Him there, the Risen Lamb: your perfect, spotless righteousness!" And remember that "while in heaven He stands, no tongue can bid you thence depart"—from the holy presence of God Himself!

And, if I can say it this way without being crass, this Jesus is the consummate "homemaker." (1) He "opens His mouth in wisdom," as the wisdom of God incarnate (1 Cor 1:30), the Word from the Father (John 1:1), and long-expected Prophet who declares God's Word to God's people (John 6:14; cf. Deut 18:15–18). (2) He works diligently. His works of obedience are all our righteousness (Matt 3:15; Rom 5:18–19). He is the one who worked and worked and worked, until the whole of God's wrath was extinguished—until there was no bitterness left in that cup

for us to drink. (3) And He provides the choicest food for His household. He is Himself the bread of life, who invites us to feed on Him by faith—to taste and see that the Lord is good. He makes us part of the Father’s household—we who were slaves, who were dogs and unclean—we are made to dwell in the household of God, where His provision is abundant! Psalm 36:8: “They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.” (4) As to clothing, Christ clothes us in garments of salvation. He wraps us in the robe of His own righteousness (cf. Isa 61:10). (5) And as for strength: no one was ever stronger than our Champion of salvation, who bore all our sins to Calvary and put them away by bearing their punishment in Himself, so that we could be reconciled to God—members of His own household. O what a *home* the Lord Jesus has *made* for His people!

And that’s true for each one of us, friends. Man, woman, boy, and girl: in every way that you have failed to live up to the standard that your Father calls you to, your elder Brother has obeyed perfectly, and has satisfied perfectly. And because you are united to Him by faith alone, the spotless robe of His righteousness is draped across your shoulders, and His blood washes your stains clean—so that despite your sins and failures, you are forgiven, and accepted by the Father.

And on that solid foundation—Accepted!—remember: Christ yours not only for justifying righteousness, but for sanctifying righteousness as well. The power to obey His commands is supplied by Him, as He works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. And so, wage the war against your sin in the strength of knowing that everything He has called you to, He has purchased for you and provided the power for you to walk in.

And to those outside of Christ, you are welcome to this same Savior, who lived, and died, and rose again in the place of sinners, who accomplished righteousness and quenched the wrath of God for all who repent and trust in Him alone for salvation. Confess your sins and failures to measure up, turn from sin and self, and find true life in Christ alone, by believing in Him for all your righteousness.