

04.05.2019 WISE WORDS FOR FAMILIES

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" Proverbs 3:5, 6

True wisdom comes from following God's will and His Word and not being led by our own desires and preferences. This is true of marriage and family life in particular.

'God Himself is the essence of true love and He is the One Who created sex and ordained marriage. He alone can therefore tell us what love really means, and how sex and marriage can be used for our greatest good. What God has said in His Word, we shall find is contrary to much that this world teaches on this subject. But the teaching of God's Word is like a rock. He who builds his life on it can never fall - no storm or earthquake will ever shake him.' *Zac Poonen.*

Marriage is honourable among all...Hebrews 13:4

Love the Right Woman

'...and God brought her to the man.' Genesis 2:22

The first marriage sets the template - God alone can lead you to the person best suited to be your marriage partner. If we believe that God has a perfect plan for our lives (Ephesians 2:10, Psalm 139:16), then if His plan for us includes marriage, He will have the right woman (or man) for you. When Abraham's servant was sent to look for a bride for Isaac, he prayed, "Lord, lead me to the girl whom you have already selected and appointed to be Isaac's wife" (*Genesis 24:14, 44*). When God answered his prayer, he could truly say, "The Lord led me" (*Genesis 24:27*).

"A father can give his sons homes and riches, but only the Lord can give them understanding wives" Proverbs 19:14

A good wife:

- Is a helper suitable for her husband – *Genesis 2:18, 20*.
- Is a crown to her husband – *Proverbs 12:4*
- A companion – *Malachi 2:14*
- loves her husbands, loves her children, is discreet, chaste, a good homemaker, good, obedient to her own husbands – *Titus 2:4, 5*

The Bible gives us examples of:

Sarah, an obedient wife. *1 Peter 3:5, 6*

Hannah, a praying wife. *1 Samuel 1:1-15*

Abigail, a prudent and intercessory wife. *1 Samuel 25:3, 14-35*

Elizabeth, a righteous wife. *Luke 1:5, 6*

Ruth, a virtuous wife. *Ruth 3:11*

The Truly Wealthy Wife

Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. Proverbs 31:10

In contrast to the adulterous woman described earlier in the book of Proverbs (5:3-14), here is found the description of the virtuous woman.

She is Industrious; She Works

She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands. She is like the merchant ships; she brings her food from afar. She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her house-hold and a portion for her maid-servants. She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out by night. She stretches out her hands to the distaff,

and her hand holds the spindle... She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is clothed with scarlet. She makes tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple... She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for the merchants... She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her is a woman whose heart is in heaven (wise and virtuous), but whose feet are firmly planted on earth. She does not fall into that category of people who are ‘too heavenly to be of any earthly good’! Instead, her spiritual wisdom is manifested is made manifest in her life and work.

Please also note that this woman was a woman of Old Testament times. Until the 19th century in the West and even now in many other cultures, women were and are dependent on their husbands, and in the case of unmarried women, a male relative. Nevertheless, in this situation, this woman achieves so much.

She is Kind; She Cares

The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain.

She does him good and not evil all the days of her life... She extends her hand to the poor; yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.... She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness.

She lives by wisdom and the law of kindness; kindness and wisdom are the abiding principles of her life. They are not manifested only to her family and whoever might be of use or support to her. No, she extends this wisdom and kindness to the poor and the needy as well. Words of wisdom and kindness proceed from her lips and tongue; she loves not only ‘with word and with tongue, but in deed and in truth’ 1 John 3:18. She has learnt the 2 great commandments: to love God and love her neighbour.

The Recognition of the Virtuous Woman

Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

“Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all.”

Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.

Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.

She is recognised and honoured by her family and by society.

The Wisdom of the Virtuous Woman and the Wisdom of God

Proverbs 8 describes the wisdom of God. There are many similarities between the virtuous wise woman and the wisdom of God. Is it not entirely possible that the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 listened to, and accepted the call of Divine Wisdom?

Below are listed some of the similarities between the wisdom of God and the virtuous woman.

- Precious and worth finding - Proverbs 8:35 / 31:10
- Worth more than rubies - Proverbs 3:15 / 31:10
- Wise - Proverbs 8:1 / 31:26
- Strong – Proverbs 8:14 / 31:17, 25
- Provides food - Proverbs 8:19 / 31:14
- Praised – Proverbs 8:34 / 31:28

Such a woman is indeed a crown to her husband.

A Call to Fathers

It is not enough to desire a wife that is a comfort and help to a man. A Christian man seeks to follow God's will in being a husband and father like the heavenly Husband and Father.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her... So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. Ephesians 5:25, 28

"And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah; and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters". Gen. 5:21-22.

A wise father:

- Trusts in God. Psalm 22:4
- Fears the Lord. 14:26
- Tells his children the wonderful works of God. Psalm 78:3
- Provides for his children. Proverbs 13:22; 19:14
- Is slow to anger. Proverbs 16:32
- Is content with what he has. Proverbs 15:27
- Corrects his children. Proverbs 29:17

Correction with Love

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

God has laid on parents the task of training children to be obedient to them. Obedience must not be exacted or demanded harshly, but with the authority of love. Love will draw our children near to us and near to God.

Many parents make the mistake of thinking their child must be given free-will from infancy. But the human will is self-centred and tainted by sin. Before the age of reasoning, before the child '*knows to refuse the evil and choose the good*' (Isaiah 7:16), we are called to train the will. As God teaches us to submit our wills to a greater Will (His) for our good, so Christian parents must train their children to submit their wills to their parents for their children's good. In obeying the Christian parent, the child will learn true obedience and as he grows up to independence, will know the importance of submitting his will to God, his heavenly Father.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

'*Train up*' does not mean physical punishment. There are 3 ideas from the Hebrew: *Dedicate* – recognise that the child belongs exclusively to God – see 1 Samuel 1:27, 28. *Instruct* – instruct children in the ways of God. *Motivate* – Create a desire in the child to follow God.

'*A child*' - means a dependent child, no matter what the age.

'*In the way that he should go*' - parents are to dedicate, motivate , train and equip to do what God desires for him - spiritually, physically, socially and mentally.

The Promise: '*when he is old (i.e. when he is independent), he will not depart from it.* If the command has been kept, the promise will be realised.

Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. Matthew 18:2-5

Even as adults, as parents with authority over our children, Jesus calls us to be child-like. A child does not live to himself – his life is centred round his parents. A child is not afraid to show his need; he trusts in all whom he meets; he loves and delights in being loved and praised; he wears no masks. This must be our attitude to God.

Let us study to be humble and child-like. And let us recognise that we must receive not only our children from birth, but every child we meet in the name and spirit of Jesus.

Calling a little child to Him, Jesus set him in the midst of them; then tenderly folding the little one in His arms He said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The simplicity, the self-forgetfulness, and the confiding love of a little child are the attributes that Heaven values. These are the characteristics of real greatness. DA p.437

Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And He laid His hands on them...Matthew 19:13-15

Jesus tells us two things in this passage. Firstly, ALWAYS PERMIT the children to come to Jesus. Secondly, do NOTHING TO HINDER their coming to Jesus.

Do we make it easy for our children to come to Jesus? Do we take them daily at the time of family prayer and worship to the feet of Jesus ourselves?

Do we hinder our children from coming to Jesus? Do we fill their lives with frivolity, with worldliness? Do we refuse to nourish and nurture them in the study of God's word, in praise and prayer, that they may see for themselves the beauty of Jesus? Do we refuse to demonstrate the unconditional love of Jesus? And the loving authority of Jesus?

"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea." Mark 9:42

Do not cause the children to stumble, to fall into sin. Do not lead them astray. Above all, do not prevent them from choosing Jesus to be the Rock on which they stand, rather than the stone at which they stumble (Psalm 118:22, Romans 9:32, 33).

The Parent's Commitment

Consecration: *For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD. 1 Samuel 1:27, 28*

But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. Joshua 24:15

Feed My lambs...John 21:15

Is not my house right with God? Has He not made with me an everlasting covenant arranged and secured in every part? 2 Samuel 23:5

The seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work; thou, nor thy son nor thy daughter...Exodus 20:8

"Now let Your words come to pass! What will be the child's rule of life, and his work?" Judges 13:12

Intercession: *Job would get up early and offer sacrifices for each of his children in order to purify them. He always did this. Job 1:5*

Faith: *I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice... 2 Timothy 1:5*

That which we have heard and known and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from the children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. Psalm 78:3, 4

Conclusion:

Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth. Everyone who is called by My name; whom I have created for My glory. Isaiah 43:6, 7

May we live in the consciousness that we are not our own. We have been created to display to the world the glory of God in our individual lives, in our marriages, in our families and in the church.

Until there is a passion for the supremacy and the glory of God in the hearts of married people, marriage will not be lived for the glory of God. And there will not be a passion for the supremacy and the glory of God in the hearts of married people until God Himself, in His manifold glories, is known. And He will not be known in His manifold glories until pastors and teachers speak of him tirelessly and constantly and deeply and Biblically and faithfully and distinctly and thoroughly and passionately. Marriage lived for the glory of God will be the fruit of churches permeated with the glory of God.

So I say again, if believers in Jesus want marriage to glorify the truth and worth and beauty and greatness of God, we must teach and preach less about marriage and more about God. Not that we preach too much on marriage, but that we preach too little on God. Knowing God and cherishing God and valuing the glory of God above all things, including your spouse, will be the key to living your marriage to the glory of God. It's true in marriage, as in every other relationship: God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. *John Piper: Preparing for Marriage.*
