

Date : 2 February 2025
Theme : Building a strong family
Topic : The visionary wife and mother in the Christian home
Key Passage : *Titus 2:3-5, Proverbs 31:27-28*
Key Verse : *...she watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed, her husband also and he praises her. Proverbs 31:27, 28*

Introduction

In today's context of work from home, it is refreshing to read that the *Proverbs 31* woman, in about 1,000 BC, worked from home and reaped the benefits of a well-ordered home, raised secure children and released her husband to serve as a leader in society. All this while she was diligently pursuing her passion with her God-given talents.

In doing so:

- She frees us from thinking that there is only one way for family dynamics to be "right" (once married with children, a woman had to choose between career and family).
- Shows how to get the best, not only for herself but for her family, without sacrificing her children's well-being, while monetising her hobbies from her home as her base.

Instead of engaging in the never-ending debate whether a mother should just stay home or develop her capabilities on a job outside, *Proverbs 31* shows how the resourceful woman, who has put her husband, children and home as priority can then pursue her desires and cultivate her passion with no loss to any of them.

- Personal valuation (worth)...*worth far more than rubies... verse 10*
Do not let society dictate your worth by your status and salary. Society places a higher status on careers rather than the homemaker.
- Life-long vocation (mission) *...she brings him (husband) good, not harm, all the days of her life verse 12*. In this, she is never retrenched or retired.
- Result: *...Her husband is respected at the city gate, ...where he takes his seat among the elders of the land... verse 31:23*. Her partnership with her husband leads to lifelong service for the public good.

The *Proverbs 31* wife is clear of her mission (to empower her husband to lead) from the first day of her marriage to the end of her life.

(Studies have shown that, as a married couple goes through changes over the years, a woman's success can impact her marriage negatively. When the wife becomes more successful (higher salary than husband's, elected to public office, won elections, etc), the chance of divorce is doubled).

- End-in-mind vision
Throughout *Proverbs 31*, the woman's activities and focus have one vision.
 - Activities...*she watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness... verse 27*
 - Vision *...her children arise and call her blessed: Her husband also, and he praises her... verse 28*. She is a blessing to her family. A harmonious family is itself a great testimony bringing glory to God.

1. Should mothers be employed outside the home?

Does it matter whether a mother works outside the home or be a stay-home mum?

Mothers with young children holding full time jobs is becoming a norm in many homes.

What should we consider?

a) The home must be the first priority.

Titus 2:5 uses the word 'oikouros', which means keepers at home or homemakers.

This verse teaches that mothers should work at her home. A house is not a home.

Someone must make it. The wise woman builds her house. *Proverbs 14:1*

Whose house are you building? Your own or someone else's?

b) Both roles are demanding. Can a mother fulfil her boss' demands and still give equal attention to her children / home?

c) Can the task of childcare be fulfilled by maids?

Why can't maids do the mother's job?

i) Young children have needs. They are changing as they grow, and for each stage close supervision is needed to form habits, teach discipline, life values and life skills.

However, discipline and good habits can only be enforced by parents. Only a parent has the authority to do this and can only do so only if he / she is present at their teachable moments.

ii) Generally, children left on their own may not learn (do their homework, etc) without parental guidance. Maids are not responsible to train children under their charge.

d) Does the presence of a homemaker make any difference?

Understand the principle of jurisdiction.

This principle is taught in *Romans 13*. For example, the authority of government is to enforce discipline in a nation. But in the home, discipline of children is the duty of parents.

This authority over children is not given to maids, neighbours, grandparents, not even the church. No one else is duty bound to administer punishment which is part of discipline.

Without discipline, particularly in the first 12 years, children miss the input necessary for self-control to prepare them for their teenage and adult years. If the husband's main role is to provide for the family, it falls on the mother to be a stay-home mum at least until the kids are in upper primary years. The father also shares this duty but only after he has fulfilled his role as provider in the home.

e) Young brains need optimum environment and support.

Deuteronomy 6 commands parents to teach children spiritual values and habits.

- The crucial brain connections that will last a child's lifetime, are formed through the interactions and experiences they have during their first five years of life. Character development sets the stage for a child's behaviour well into adulthood and future academic learning.
- When our brain fails to get what it expects and needs, especially in certain critical or sensitive periods, then optimal outcomes are less likely.

2. How should the husband love his wife?

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.
Ephesians 5:25*

The husband needs to provide emotional support for his wife. For the wife to carry out what she aspires to do for her family, her own needs must be met. She needs the loving support of her husband.

How does the husband love (provide emotional support for) his wife?

- a) By relating to her according to knowledge, acquired through careful listening. *1 Peter 3:7*
A husband makes the effort to know his wife's preferences (what she likes and dislikes), by being considerate to her weakness, expressions, stories. The husband can make it his lifelong endeavour to laugh with his wife's jokes, agree or be appreciative, etc.
- b) Honouring her by acts of kindness and sharing.
Treating her as special, serving her in a way that reflects attentiveness. Opening a door, picking up a load that's too heavy for her. Be alert in every situation.
Initiating time for sharing plans and ideas. Some call this connection time; a time for unhurried conversation. In our hectic schedules, this can be overlooked.
Solomon calls this time *in my garden Song of Songs 5:1*
(Most times we are in a hurry, even on vacations; we feel we must go places and see everything).
- c) Praying together, blessing one another, bringing family needs before the Lord.
We need God's help and wisdom to fulfil our roles. *Proverbs 14:1*
...unless the Lord builds the house, we labour in vain Psalms 127:1.

3. Why do marriages fail?

When both spouses, though church-going believers, do not submit to God's Word, the chances of Christian marriages following the divine pattern of Christ' sacrificial love for the church, will not be high.

- a) Making choices that are contrary to God's Word – result of not accepting God's Word as biblical truths (absolutes).
example: Adultery is a violation of God's 7th command. Unfortunately, the erring partner often gives excuses as exceptions; which amount to acts of insubordination against God.
Common excuses are:
 - Loneliness (when one spouse is away)
 - Quarrelling, unhappiness
 - Giving consent to each other to sleep with someone else
 - Revenge *since my partner did it, I can also...*
 - *...I never meant it to happen, but I was caught up in the passion.*
 - *...I could not help it after watching pornographic videos, or after flirting innocently with a friend...*
- b) Carry over habits of singlehood.
Marriage relationships need the following life-style changes.
 - Relationship change (in relation to members of the opposite sex).
The marriage vows require both spouses to 'forsake all others'.

- Life change (from individual to couple).
The couple sees themselves as a team. Team thinking replaces 'I' thinking.
There is no "I" in teamwork.
- Hobbies / pastime change.
Hobbies such as solo travel and cruises to exotic places alone are out.
Going out on dates with friends of the opposite sex is also out.
- Habits change.
This involves synchronising schedules with each other, such as meal times, bed times, etc. instead of taking off at a wimp.

c) Lack of synergy in purpose

(Wife is unwilling to be his helper or to wait for undecisive husband to make up his mind).

- Failure to appreciate God's gifts of spouse and children.
How should we treasure God's gifts to us?
...children are a heritage from the Lord...a reward from Him... Psalms 127:3
He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the Lord. Proverbs 18:22

How to fulfil synergy in marriage?

- Vision (lifesaver, life-giving presence)
God said...I will make a help meet for him (Adam)... Genesis 2:18
(help = ezer. The Lord is our help ezer Psalm 33:20).
The word ezer means to rescue, to be strong, denoting strength. It means woman is a lifesaver, military ally, to supply resources the other person does not have. Thus ezer is not a diminutive role. The wife rises up to confront conflicts as a military ally.

A helper's role includes helping her husband to discern God's will. She helps to cast their vision / life goals for the future. It is because we have become one, both striving to do that one thing God has purposed for us to do as a couple. It is not a case of the husband having his own dream and the wife having another. It is not giving up her dream to help him fulfil his. No! Because we are now one unit, God has assigned one dream for both. It is *us*, not *me*, anymore.

- Synergy
God does not have one assignment for the husband, another for the wife. But because two are better than one, the synergy of two is more productive and impactful than each individual unit on its own.
- Mission
Submission is based on a God-given mission – life goals that have eternal value.
God's Kingdom is the only one worthy of our sacrifices.
(Just living for the next holiday event is hardly a worthy mission).

Application

How would synergy look like in your family to help the mother fulfil her homemaker role when the children are young?

Husband to.....

Wife to.....

Both to.....

