Rock Valley Bible Church (www.rvbc.cc)

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May 9, 2010 by Steve Brandon

Wisdom For Mother's Day

Proverbs

1. Mothers: Fear the Lord
2. Husbands: Praise Your Wife
3. Children: Honor Your Mother
4. Mothers: Teach Your Children
5. Couples: Strive for Harmony
6. Wives: Build Your Home

Two things have converged in my life this week. First of all, I attended the Workshop on Biblical Exposition at College Church (See http://www.simeon.org). It's a gathering of pastors who are committed to Biblical exposition in their weekly pulpit ministries. In many ways, I consider it is Spring Training. When Kent Hughes was there leading the workshop before his retirement a few years ago, he would begin every year with the illustration of Cal Ripkin, Jr., who played baseball in the major leagues for 21 years. He was an All-Star for 19 of those years. He holds the record for the most consecutive games played: 2,632 games. He voluntarily took himself out of the starting lineup for the last game of the 1998 season. And yet, Kent Hughes would often say, "Every Spring, he went to spring training to reinforce the fundamentals: looking the ball into the mitt, keeping his swing compact, stretching to prevent injury." He likened the workshop to Spring Training, where preachers would be reminded of the fundamentals. And one of the things that I greatly appreciate about this workshop is how they attempt to focus upon different portions of Scripture each year to force us to think of things other than Pauline epistles. This year, they focused upon poetry and wisdom literature. So, I've been thinking about poetry and wisdom literature this week: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job.

The second thing that converged in the course of the year is this morning. It's known as "Mother's Day" in our land. It's an opportunity for us to honor our mothers. Every one of us have a mother. It's good for us to give them honor. And so, in light of these two events, I have decided this morning to preach a Mother's

Day message from wisdom literature. My message this morning is entitled: "Wisdom for Mother's Day" My text is the book of Proverbs.

Rather than landing on one text this morning and digging into that one specific passage, I'm going to go to multiple passages in the Proverbs to pull out wisdom for us all on this Mother's Day. And, I will let you know, my message this morning isn't merely for mothers alone. As we go along, I will have plenty of application for everyone in the family. If you look there on your notes, you will see that I have application for mothers. I also have application for children and for husbands as well. The reason why is because Mother's Day really ought to be a family affair.

Surely, there are some homes in which life is terrible all year long. The kids are out of control. The marriage is a wreck. Mom gets no respect. But, then, comes Mother's Day, and all appears to be well! For once, the children are appreciative and helpful. For once, the husband says some nice things about his wife. But, the next day, things revert to the way they were. Mom is taken for granted and the grind begins again. This is not the path to having a great Mother's Day. You want to have a great Mother's Day? Then prepare for it all year log. Women, live so as to be worthy of the praise you receive. Husbands, show your love for your wife throughout the year. Children, give honor to your parents every day. And then, Mother's Day will be especially sweet.

And so, my message this morning will address all of us, that we might especially enjoy this Mother's Day, as well as others in the future. Let's begin at the end of Proverbs. So, turn to Proverbs 31. We are going to start at the very end of the book: Proverbs 31. I want for you to look at verse 30. It says this, ...

> Proverbs 31:30
> Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

Here's my first point this morning:
1. Mothers: Fear the Lord

Do you see the contrast in verse 30? The first half of the verse describes the woman who is seeking the approval of others. The last half of the verse describes the woman who is seeking the approval of the LORD. Your personality and your wit can be attractive to others. You can talk with others in such a way that you are just plain fun to be around. People laugh in your presence. People enjoy your company.

So also with beauty. Your beauty will attract the attention of others. People may well enjoy being with you, as you are lovely to behold. But, alas, your charm and your beauty can be used to deceive as well. With sweet talking, you can get what you want. With an attractive face and body, your way is smoothed as well. Earlier in Proverbs, the case was presented when the adulteress captured her prey. Her husband was gone, so she went on the hunt for the naïve young man who lacked sense (Prov. 7:7). With her dress (Prov. 7:10) and "with her many persuasions, she entices him" (Prov. 7:21). And he goes, "as an ox ... to the slaughter." (Prov. 7:23). Such is the deceptive power of beauty and charm. It can ruin a man's life.

Women, you can do this as well. Oh, perhaps you won't persuade into adultery. But, you may persuade into a favor from a friend, or into something from your husband. But, on the other hand, God calls you to trust in something else. Rather than trust in your appearances and in your personality, the call of this verse is to "fear the LORD." In other words, have your eyes upon the eternal rather than upon the here and now. Realize that there is more to life than meets the eye. It's the eye of the LORD that is upon you, watching the evil and the good (Prov. 15:3). So, live to please the LORD in all your ways.

And such a woman, as it says in verse 30, shall be praised. So, Mothers: Fear the Lord. This is an easy admonition. It is the core of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs has been written for us to know how to live a life of wisdom. And it can only be lived "Coram Deo," in the face of the Lord.

You read about the fear of the LORD in the book of Proverbs. Back in Proverbs chapter 1, verse 7, we read, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." In Proverbs 15:33, we read, "The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom." You want to live a wise life, mothers? Live in the fear of the LORD. In the context of the Bible, certainly, we know that this has to start by trusting in Jesus Christ and His atoning work! We fear the Lord, because we know what our sins deserve. And yet, we can rejoice in Him, knowing that our sins are forgiven. Such knowledge changes our lives. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:15, "and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." Proverbs is the working out of the one who fears the Lord, who believes in Him, who trusts Him, who walks in His ways.

And how do you as mothers practically do this? Proverbs 31 paints the picture of the woman who fears the LORD. She has an eye upon the LORD in all her labors, not serving herself, but Him. She is called "an excellent wife" in verse 10. Her

worth is "far above jewels." She lives in such a way that her husband trusts in her with all things (verse 11). Verse 12 says, "She does him good and not evil all the days of her life." She is industrious (verses 13-14, 16, 24). She works hard (verses 15, 17-18). She is generous (verses 19-20). She provides for her children (verses 21-22). She has a good reputation (verse 23). She looks to the future with joy (verse 25).

All of these are ways that you fear the LORD. And, we could certainly spend more time thinking about this. For the sake of time this morning, however, we will move on. Let's move on to my second point this morning, ...

2. Husbands: Praise Your Wife

We are here in Proverbs 31. Look at verse 28, ...

> Proverbs 31:28-29
> Her children rise up and bless her; her husband also, and he praise her saying: "Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all."

Now, obviously, there was much to praise in this Proverbs 31 woman. She was the "super woman," operating her home with excellence, getting up before everyone else (31:15), staying up late (31:18), engaging in business (31:14, 16), providing everything for the family, providing everything for her husband. Surely, such a woman is easy to praise. I am fortunate to have such a woman. Boys, in your search for a wife, look for such a one with these sorts of qualities. Girls, be such a woman, so that you will be a blessing to your future husband.

Now, men, the fact that your wife isn't a Proverbs 31 woman doesn't mean that you are off the hook here. You need to be verbally expressing your appreciation for your wife. I say that you need to because the Scripture calls us to build up one another with our words. Ephesians 4:29 says, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear." Though these words are especially written within the context of church life, they are especially true in our marriages. Men, build up your wives. Certainly, your wife will have her faults. But, surely, you can find some ways to commend her.

If you would merely thank her for everything that she did for you, your evening conversation would never stop. "Honey, thanks for making dinner tonight. I especially liked the mashed potatoes. It was very tasty. Thanks for setting the table and making it look nice. Honey, thanks for doing the laundry today. I appreciate

having clean clothes in my dresser every day. Thanks for the way that you cleaned up the house today. I noticed that you picked up after the children today. You put away my clothes that I had left out. Honey, thanks for taking care of the children today. Thanks for the diapers you changed today. Thanks for what you taught the children today. Thanks for reading the Bible with them this morning when I was at work. Honey, thanks for taking the time to go to the story today. Thanks for getting the food we need to eat. Thanks for purchasing the little things at the store that you do, like toothpaste and toilet paper and pens and paper towels and sticky notes and sponge pads and batteries and light bulbs and fertilizer and frying pans and Styrofoam cups and vacuum bags. Honey, thanks for filling up the car when you went out this morning. Thanks for praying for me today. Thanks for praying for the children today. Thanks for keeping the checkbook current. Thanks for the phone calls that you made today. ..."

Tell me, wives, is this the sort of thing that you would love to hear from the mouths of your husbands? I'm telling you men, if you think about it, the list will be endless. And you want to know a secret? Your words of praise to your wife help push her on to be more like the Proverbs 31 woman that you want to have. Praising a wife is like greasing a slide. It's like home field advantage. Sports teams play better at home than when they are away. Why? What helps the home team to win more often than the visiting team? It is not that they have fans who are cheering on their every play? Isn't it easier to push toward the finish line when you have a crowd of people encouraging you on? You can run a bit faster when you hear the roar of the crowd. And when you are encouraging your wife on in her work, you will find that she pursues it more easily.

Do you want a Proverbs 31 woman? Then, praise her. Identify evidences of grace in her life. Encourage her to fear the Lord. So, husbands, praise your wife. You might say, "I'm not so verbal. It's hard to speak with my wife." I say, "Get it done. Write a note. Be an encourager." I believe that when your heart truly finds delight in your wife, your lips will follow. Solomon tells us (in Proverbs 5:18) to "Rejoice in the wife of your youth." This is what Mother's day is about. It's a day set aside to rejoice in the mother of our children. It's a day set aside for husbands to rejoice in wives and lead their children to do the same. Do you want a great Mother's Day for your wife? Cultivate these things all year long and Mother's Day will be a wonderful day!

We've talked about mothers: Fear the Lord. We've talked about husbands: Praise Your Wife. Let's turn our attention to children.

3. Children: Honor Your Mother

Now, of course, this is one of the Ten Commandments. And we all know that children are to honor their father and their mother. Now, the Proverbs say the same thing, but they say it in a slightly different way than Moses did.

For instance, turn over to Proverbs 10:1. It says this: "A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother." Making your father glad is a way to honor your father. And giving your mother grief is a way to dis-honor your mother. The wise son brings joy to his parents, and thus, honor. The foolish son brings grief to his parents, and thus dishonor. Children, do you want to hurt your mother? Then, be a foolish child. Do you want to be a grief to your mother? Then, be a fool.

Over my years of pastoring, I have noticed that one of the things that grieve parents most is when they have a wayward child. Another way to say that is that they have a "foolish" child. They have a child who doesn't "listen to advice and accept instruction" (Prov. 19:20). Instead, their child is hard-headed, and goes his own way into his own destruction, and he loves it so.

Look down to Proverbs 10:23, "Doing wickedness is like a sport to a fool." Fools love wickedness. They run into it; they engage it; they enjoy themselves all the way until they begin to reap the consequences. And even then, the foolish often don't learn. The drunkard says, "They struck me, but I did not become ill; they beat me, but I did not know it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink." (Prov. 23:35).

Children, I don't think that you realize the power you have to give joy or to give heartache to your parents. Your parents want nothing but the best for you, and the best for you is the way of wisdom. Sadly, many children choose the path of foolishness instead. I'm telling you, children, foolish behavior will give your parents far more pain and suffering than anything else than you could do to them.

The ways of the fool are many. The Proverb describes the fool in many ways. The fool is arrogant and careless (Prov. 14:16). The fool is naïve (Prov. 8:5). The fool talks too much and reveals his own folly (Prov. 18:2). The fool is self-sufficient (Prov. 28:26). The fool loses his temper (Prov. 29:11). The fool is often engaged in strifes and conflicts (Prov. 20:3). The fool spreads slander (Prov. 10:18) The fool is quick-tempered (Prov. 14:17). And the fools fail to learn from their mistakes (Prov. 26:11; 27:22).

Children, when you act and behave in these ways, you bring grief to your mother. Proverbs 10:1says, "A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother." Verses like this are all over the Proverbs. Proverbs 15:20 tells us, "A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother." Proverbs 17: 2 says, "A foolish son is a grief to his father. And bitterness to her who bore him." And there are a bunch more that speak of the harm that a foolish child does to his father. Proverbs 17:21 says, "He who sires a fool does so to his sorrow and the father of a fool has no joy."

Children, do you want your mother's life to be bitter? Then, be a foolish child. Here's some wisdom for Mother's Day: Children, be wise and honor your mother. "Pursue wisdom like sport" (Prov. 10:23). Proverbs 23:25 tells us to, "Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her rejoice who gave birth to you." That's true honor.

Let's move on to our fourth bit of counsel from Proverbs.
4. Mothers: Teach Your Children

This point really flows from my last one. My last point was addressed to the children: honor your mother by being a wise child. But, you must remember, every child is born into this world a sinner. A child will naturally head toward foolishness. Children need to be trained in righteousness. They need to be trained in wisdom. If ever they will live righteous and wise lives, they need to come to know Jesus. So tell them of Jesus. Show them what it means to trust in Jesus. Call them to repent and believe.

So, parents, if you want your children to rise up and bless you and honor you on Mother's Day, it's going to take some work throughout the year in order to see Mother's Day come with blessing. And that's my point. Mothers: Teach Your Children. God has ordained two means by which we are able to train our children. The first is physical and the second is verbal. Proverbs 22:15 says that, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him."

Here's the picture. Your little bundle of joy has foolishness in him, and he needs to have it driven away. God has given you the gift of the rod to drive it from the child. Now, I'm not talking about striking in anger or frustration and physically hurting your child in any way. I'm talking about when your child sins and you observe it. And, your child is old enough to understand between right and wrong.

Without anger, you remove the child from the situation, like into another room (or the bathroom with the fan running, so that the child won't be shamed). Once there, you explain to the child what he did and why it was wrong. You explain to the child that you love them, but God tells you to spank them. You quote Proverbs 13: 24 to them, "He who withholds his rod hates his son. But he who loves him disciplines him diligently" You explain to them that sin is painful. You take off their pants. You lay them on the ground (or over your knee). You tell your child how many swats they will receive (almost always, I have only given them one). You apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge. Then, you put their pants (and their diapers) back on and you hug them and kiss them and comfort them and tell them that you love them over and over and over again, "I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you." And then, you explain the gospel to them, "You sinned. You did wrong. Sin hurts. There are consequences to sin. God tells me to spank you to teach you the consequences. I spank you because I love you. You need to fell that sin hurts. I forgive you. But, I can't take away your sins. Only Jesus can take away your sins. You need to believe in Him." And then you pray with your child, pleading that God would open their hearts to the glories of the gospel of Christ."

And if you do it right, your child will be happy after being disciplined. This has been our experience. Our children beam with joy after they have been disciplined. And because they know that everything has been dealt with. They know that they won't have to give account to us any longer for the wrong that they did. They know that we aren't angry with them. They know that we love them.

Now, when your children are younger, the rod is the primary means of training them. But, as they get older, it's the verbal aspect of training that takes over. The Proverbs calls it "reproof." Turn over to Proverbs 29:15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom." Remember, the rod removes foolishness and gives wisdom. As your children get older, you will be spanking less and speaking more. This can take lots of different forms. But, it requires talking. Dialogue back and forth. Help them to interpret life, like Solomon did. Consider his words, ...

> Proverbs 24:30-34
> I passed by the field of the sluggard and by the vineyard of the man lacking sense. And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; it's surface was covered with nettles, and it's stone wall was broken down. When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest," then your poverty will come as a robber and your want like an armed man.

Here, Solomon was interpreting life. Do this with your children. We have done this recently with a book called "Cheapskate Monthly" that we bought for fifty cents at a book sale. It's a book written by Mary Hunt, who found herself deep in debt because of her spending habits. We have been pulling out this book at dinner time and reading about the danger of debt. We hope that the Lord would use this book to protect our children from debt as we talk about these things.

This is the premise of what we are doing with our teenagers at Rock Valley Bible Church. We have fathers meeting with their sons and mothers meeting with their daughters. We want to talk with our children about life. We want to help interpret life for them. We want to talk about idols and peer pressure and sex and food and finances and truth with our children. We want to talk of purity of heart and passion for God. It's so unfortunate that as children get older and into their teen years, that they tend to drift from communicating with their parents. They are so busy with their friends and school and activities, that they often have little time with their parents. And I just say, "Parents, train your children." Interpret the world for them. Guide them. Teach God's word to them. And then, Mother's Day will be sweet.

I've heard people comment to me before about appreciating my heart for my own children. They have identified the obvious. I love my children. I like the little guys, rough and tumble. I like the little girls in their cuteness. But, the older they have become, I have enjoyed them even more and more. I love spending time with them. I love teaching them. I love directing them toward good resources. I love discipling them in the faith. But, know this: It's purely selfish. I have my eye toward the end, when they grow up to be wise children. I know the blessing that will come to Yvonne and me if our children are walking with the LORD in wisdom. It doesn't matter if they are wealthy or poor. It doesn't matter if they are healthy or sick. If they love the Lord Jesus and are walking with Him in wisdom, then I know that my later days will be blessed. I know that we will have blessed Mother's Days. 3 John 4 says that, "I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth."

Another thing that drives me on is that I have seen those children who have never been spanked. They have never been taught (or corrected) by their parents. And I have seen how they are a curse to their parents. Oh, may this never be for your family. I'm merely gearing my own life that I might avoid the curse, by God's grace. May you do the same.

Let's press on to my fifth point, ...
5. Couples: Strive for Harmony

As you teach your children, husband and wife, be united. May dad's teaching be mom's teaching! If there is a difference or a conflict between you, your children will know it. How many times have your children asked mom something, getting one answer, which they didn't want to hear. And so, they turn around and go to dad, who gives them another answer. You had better deal with your differences.

> Proverbs 1:8-9
> Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching; indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head and ornaments about your neck.

Implied in this statement is the fact that a father's instruction is the same as a mother's teaching. Verse 9 describes them together. "*They* are a graceful wreath." Father's teaching and mother's teaching, interlaced together as materials in a wreath. We see the same thing in the following verses:

> Proverbs 6:20-22
> My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother; bind them continually on your heart; tie them around your neck. When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk to you.

Again, I believe that the same assumption is made. A father's teaching and mother's teaching are in harmony with each other. They are given clear direction in their teaching. Your children know where your differences lie. Disharmony in your marriage will affect your children. You want to have a delightful Mother's Day? Then, work to resolve your differences, especially as they relate to your children. When there is harmony in the home, Mother's Day will be a delight.

I believe that the best way to strive for unity is to be spiritually engaged with each other. Read the Bible together. Talk about the Bible together. Read Christian books together. Listen to the same things. Dialogue and talk. As much as I have enjoyed engaging my children, my joy has been equal with my wife. We have ongoing spiritual dialogue concerning the ways of God. When we have seen things differently, we have sought to resolve them. (Spending the hours needed locked in our bedroom discussing them).

Pray together. Pray for each other. Pray with each other. Did you know that most married couples don't pray with each other? As I look out upon all of you, my

guess is that very few of you pray together. You can have all sorts of objectives. I believe that one big way to strengthen your marriage and unify your hearts is to pray together. I would encourage you to start small. At dinner time, read a few verses of the Bible before dinner. Start with one minute and 1 verse. After you get used to this, try a few more verses. Pray together at dinner at when you go to bed. If you want a happy Mother's Day, have a happy marriage.

Finally, ...
6. Wives: Build Your Home

Sadly, there are women, who tear down their houses, rather than build them up. It's hard to believe, but it is true. "The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands" (Proverbs 14:1). Now, obviously here, we aren't talking about physically destroying your house. Rather, we are talking about something else. We are talking about tearing down those in your house, that the house isn't unified.

I believe that one of the most common ways of doing this is with the tongue. Rather then building each other up with our words, we tear each other down. This is a particular temptation for women. We can trace it back to the fall. Genesis 3:16 says, "Your desire will be for your husband, but he will rule over you." You have a desire to rule, but he is stronger. So, you fight and quarrel and break down.

There are some verses in Proverbs that describe the contentious woman. She's the one who is always arguing, always seeking her own way. And, she may get her own way. But, in the process, she may be tearing down her house. Proverbs 21:9, "It is better to live in a corner of a roof Than in a house shared with a contentious woman." (repeated in 25:24). Proverbs 21:19, "It is better to live in a desert land Than with a contentious and vexing woman." Proverbs 27:15, "A constant dripping on a day of steady rain And a contentious woman are alike." (see also Prov. 19:13, "the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping").

I'm thinking of someone that I know right now (not someone in this church, nor anyone that you know). She is a contentious woman. She's always talking. She's always putting forth her point. She's always right. Do you know what's happened? Her son hates being home. He comes home from school and promptly leaves for several hours until dad comes home from work. Then, there's a measure of peace in the home. I've heard that they are merely holding out on their marriage until their kids are out of the home in a few years. In all likelihood, a divorce is coming. She's tearing her house down by her words. I don't even think that she knows it.

Wives, don't do this. Instead, build your home. How? Show grace. Prov. 11:16 says that, "A gracious woman attains honor." Do you want honor this Mother's Day? Be gracious. Do you want honor a year from now? Be gracious! Be gracious to your husband. Be gracious to your children. As you have received mercy from God, share it with others. As you have been forgiven by God, forgive others. As you have been loved by God, love others. This is the key to a wonderfully happy Mother's Day today and in years to come.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 9, 2010 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.