

## Podcast 245 Honoring Mom

“Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh.” (Hebrews 10:24–25) This is the spirit of this podcast as we discuss ways we can help our moms and wives.

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for the beauty of the family and the wisdom that you put into it when you designed it and the benefits to all concerned when we do things according to your word and I pray that you'll illuminate this passage we're going to consider today. Actually two passages, and give us new insights and ways that we can apply them in our home and the ways that we can help each other stir one another up to love and good works. In Jesus' name, amen.

Early on in my married life, I started figuring out that my wife was different than me and that we're from different planets. A man is different than a woman. God created them male and He created them female. I also discovered that I could help my wife by helping with the dishes or helping with some cleaning or how much it blessed Sandi to bring home dinner once in a while.

Sometimes I would come home and I could tell that buying a pizza would be just the thing. Later I found that better than bringing a pizza is taking the children with you to get the pizza. A homeschool mom needs a breather from those little blessings, those arrows in her quiver. It's an ongoing process as husbands and wives figure out ways that they can build each other up and encourage each other.

Being a man, I noticed that most of the time when you talk to men, you ask what they do or what their hobby is. Dr. James Dobson, once said on Focus on the Family that, "It's just the way men are wired." And I noticed even in the book go Jonah when the ship was beset by a huge storm, the men on board woke up Jonah and asked him, "Where are you from and what do you do?" Typical man conversation.

I was thinking about that one day and wondering where my wife finds encouragement because she's a stay at home mom. If she were asked, what do you do, what would she say. I am a full-time stay-at-home mom, which is a very rare commodity in the world in which we live in now. Not only is it a rare commodity, it's often a commodity that's not honored. It's seen as second class.

I thought my wife's not going to be in the local newspaper as mom of the year. Who's going to build her up? What's she going to do to be encouraged? With this thought in my mind, I happened to be reading through Proverbs and I came to Proverbs 31:26–27. If there are any moms listening, just take a deep breath, you can

relax. We all know this chapter is about a wonderful woman. As I read, some of the verses just jumped off the page at me. "26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. 27 She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness."

These verses describe Sandi to a T. Teaching my children with wisdom. She's kind. She's compassionate. She's taking care of us. She's planning meals. She's helping them pick out their clothes, all of these activities.

Then the next verse, the light bulb went off. It said, "Her children rise up and call her blessed." And I thought, if my wife is pouring her life into her family, especially into her children, it's the children that have the opportunity to rise up and call her blessed. Not her girlfriends, not the people at church, but her children, the very ones that are receiving and benefitting from her ministry, should rise up and call her blessed.

One day I came home and I found Sandi crying in our bedroom. She was curled up in a ball. It had been a very rough day. I asked what was going on. She described her day and all four boys were on their worst behavior. And if I may add, the fifth boy wasn't doing much better. I knew that pizza wasn't going to help today. I knew that helping out with the dishes and cleaning was a far cry from what she needed. In fact, she read her journal entry for that many years later. It was hard to hear because at one point she said, "At least the big booger apologized." I was the big booger.

Anyway, it was an awful day. Sandi was at the bottom, in the Slough of Despond, and I thought, this is an opportunity to apply Proverbs 31. I left her in the room after rubbing her back and trying to comfort her and I went and I found all the boys, and gathered them together in the living room. I said, "Mom's not doing well. It's been a really tough day. We've all contributed to it." I went on to say, "Do you think there's a way that we could encourage her?"

We found chairs and placed them in a circle in the living room. I suggested, "I think we ought to have a service where we bless Sandi, honor her, and think of things that she does for us." And I went back and I brought Sandi out and her eyes were still red and teary. She sat down in the middle of the circle and I started it and the boys followed my lead did a beautiful job. We began going around the room.

"Thank you for teaching me to read." The next son, "Thank you for reading books to us." Next one, "Thank you for making us food." Then, "Thank you for doing our laundry. (We had tried to teach our kids to do it, but it was really counterproductive.)" They continued, "Thank you for praying for me. Thank you for telling me about Jesus. Thank you for making school so fun."

It was magnificent. We went around the room several times and focused on all the different things that she did for our family. I noticed the tears started drying up and she began feeling better.

That was a landmark day. I tried to encourage the boys, "Let's not make this just a one time event when we're really in a difficult situation, but let's try to do this on a regular basis." I still have an image in my mind of my third son Joseph, walking down the hall past Sandi and he looked at her and he said, "Blessed," because that's what that verse in Proverbs 31 says, "Her children rise up and call her blessed."

Bless or praise, they're pretty much same word so they praise their mom and they bless her and they encourage her and they honor her. Those three things are so foreign to most homes and especially this present culture in which we live.

## On the Road

I like to do this when I am speaking to families at conferences. I begin by explaining the concept and then say, "I would like to have all the children stand up." And all the children stand up. And I tell them the parable of the wise man and the foolish man to show how important it is to do the Word of God and not just read it. The difference between people that built their house on the rock and the people that built their house on the sand was obedience.

"Everyone then who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand." (Matthew 7:24-26)

After I read Proverbs 31:28, "Her children rise up and call her blessed" I ask the kids who are present if they would like to apply it? Then I suggest they gather around their mom, and wait while they make a little circle. When everyone is in place I say, "Maintain eye contact and then on the count of three, look your mom in her eye and say, 'Blessed.'"

The moms drink it in and some even shed a few tears. God designed children to rise up and bless their moms. I don't know if rise up means get up in the morning and call her blessed or if it means to stand up and call her blessed, as a way of honoring her. But I make them stand up.

## Husbands Also

Then I add, "Oh, by the way, I'd like to read the next couple of verses."

"Her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.'" (Proverbs 31:28-29)

This command is not just for the kids, but the husband also has a role in this wonderful work of honoring their wife. I have the husbands either stand up, kneel, or put their arm around her and look their wife in the eye and repeat after me. "Many

women have done excellently, but you surpass them all." After they do that and gently suggest they can kiss their bride if they want.

This is a principle that when applied will be a deep source of encouragement to moms. Since she is pouring her life into her family she needs her family to honor and praise her for her efforts. I think of moms as the grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies, while bearing good fruit. Her work is often hidden. It's extremely valuable, but it's a death of sorts. It's a death to her career. It's a death to her personal ambitions. As she takes up her cross and follows Jesus, she also bears lasting fruit and finds her life as she loses it.

The rest of Proverbs 31 says, "Charm is deceitful." Another version says, "Grace is deceitful and beauty is vain. But a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the fruit of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates." And if you've read all of Proverbs 31, you'll recognize that immediately before this passage it says, "Her husband is known in the gates." It is common knowledge that behind every successful man is a special woman. Now it is up to the husband, who's now a success and sitting in the gates, to let his wife be praised and give her the honor due her.

### More than Once

This is a great activity to do on a regular basis, not just when we find mom curled up and crying. It's up to dad to set the tone. He is the one that needs to take the initiative and call the troops together to honor his wife and praise her and teach his children how to praise her and honor her. But when we do apply this Scriptural principle, we're not only benefiting mom, but we're benefiting the kids. Honoring their father and mother helps them inherit God's promise. Paul says the fifth commandment given on Mt. Sinai is the first commandment accompanied with a promise.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.'" (Ephesians 6:1-3)

In our home, I did not set out with such lofty ambitions, I was simply trying to encourage my wife. I wanted to find ways to praise her and bless her. But if the dad and the kids will apply this activity, everybody benefits.

Now, let me take this concept a little further. If you noticed what my sons and I said, being males, we honored Sandi for what she did. She cooked well, she took care of our clothing needs, she ran a wonderful house, she was a wonderful teacher, all these wonderful things that she did. That's how men think. We think in terms of what people do and not who they are.

### Character

Several years later I was at a conference led by Ken Nair who wrote the book, *Discovering the Mind of a Woman*, one of the few marriage books that I have found beneficial. He taught the audience, "It's important to honor your wife, not only for what she does, but who she is. In other words, her character."

Let's go back to Proverbs 31 where we see accomplishments and character qualities mentioned. Scott help me rephrase things the worthy woman has done as character qualities instead of as a list of accomplishments. She opens her mouth with wisdom and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. How would we rephrase that? Instead of saying, thank you for teaching me, we could say...

Scott Moore: You are wise and kind.

Steve Demme: Wonderful. You get an A.

The next one says, "She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness."

Scott Moore: I would say she's diligent.

Steve Demme: Good!

Then Ken Nair said, "I would like to encourage each of you to stand up, look at your spouse, and honor her character." Before I tell you what I said that day, let me give you a little background.

Before we attended this marriage retreat, we had been talking and Sandi had been communicating to me that some days she wakes up with a cloud over her thinking about John's care. She recognizes that having a special needs child is never going to stop and she's going to be doing this daily regimen the rest of her life. She's going to be taking care of Johnny's gums. She's going to be monitoring his bowel movements. She's going to be setting doctor's appointments. She's going to be making sure he has his bath, etc.

For moms of typical children, they know they will be caring for their child in a similar way when they are young, but when they grow older, they don't have to invest the same type of energy caring for their daily needs. We have a special needs child who just turned 33 this summer and this retreat was many years ago. While Sandi was talking she said "I wake up under a cloud because I am aware that these responsibilities are never going to end. I'll be doing them until I go to the grave." This task was wearing on her and it helped her to share it with me helped because we could bear each other's burdens differently. This conversation was fresh in my mind.

When I stood up I looked at her and said, "Thank you for your diligent and caring heart and the excellent way you take care of our son." Boom. These words went right to the mark. What happened next was a surprise. She awoke the next morning and said, "The cloud went away." Somehow, by honoring her for who she was, her big caring diligent heart, hit the mark and she added, "I now have joy at the prospect of taking care of our son."

When we apply God's Word we do not know the outcome, but God does. Ken Nair didn't tell us that that was going to happen, but my sons and I have found benefit in honoring Sandi for her character. By the way, as you know, we've divided up his physical care. I am now in charge of teeth, feet, personal grooming, and ears. I brush his teeth twice a day. I'm getting pretty good at flossing. I've been doing this for several years now.

The Bible says to give "Honor to whom honor is due." If I can set the tone for my sons and apply this principle myself as her husband, my wife is going to be built up. She's going to be encouraged. This is a wonderful family activity to continue, not only on birthdays, but on a regular basis. May God give us ideas for ways to honor one another, build each other up, and encourage each other, and as it says in Proverbs, "Rise up and call her blessed." Amen?

When I learned this concept I changed the way I sought to bless Sandi. I used to frequently buy flowers for her. As the florist wrapped up the bouquet, I would write little cards like. I love you or something like that. Then I got the idea, I could use this as an opportunity to honor her for her character.

On another occasion I was thinking of Sandi and asked God to reveal her inner character to me so I could honor her. God helped me to really see her and I started writing down words and qualities as fast as I could. Then I started writing these characteristics on cards. Then when I gave her flowers or some gift, I would write a card and choose one of those attributes to honor her.

Now I'm feeling stirred to do more of it. It's not natural for us to think of others ahead of ourselves. But with God's help, we can do it. This activity and attitude bears wholesome and edifying fruit for everybody, husbands and kids as well as the wife and mother.

Let's pray:

Thank you father for your Word. Who would have ever thought about having children rise up and call her mom blessed? Who would have thought of husbands telling their wife that many have done excellently, but you surpass them all? And thank you for this whole idea of having an honoring attitude, because we know in the last days it's going to be the polar opposite. Children will be disobedient to parents and without natural affection, but I pray that among Your people, this will not go out of style but that You will restore it and that You will help us to learn how to build each other up, honor one another, praise each other, and give honor to whom honor is due. In Jesus' name, amen.