The Incredible Worth of a Woman Selected Scriptures

Introduction

Twenty-five years ago I cut out the Miss Manners etiquette column of a newspaper because she made some interesting observations concerning Mother's Day in our modern society that bear repeating for the confusion has only become more widespread.

"It's all very well to talk about honoring Mother today. But, as Miss Manners well knows, there are many people nowadays who can't figure out who Mother is.

"Is she Father's new wife who is younger than the children? What about a cherished former motherin-law? Or the family friend who soothed the children while their parents were preoccupied with their divorce?

"Even if you can identify Mother, who is supposed to honor her? Just her children, or also the father of those children? Suppose he is no longer married to her? Or suppose he only acquired the alreadyfathered children through marriage to her?

"What about the paternal grandmother of those children - does she honor the mother, or does the mother honor her? Should the biological mother be honoring her children's adoptive mother, or vice versa?" (Miss Manners, LA Herald Examiner, 5/13/90)

It is tragic that so much confusion and commercialism now surround "Mother's Day." That was certainly not the intention of Anna M. Jarvis of West Virginia when in 1908 she persuaded local churches to express sincere thanks and proper honor to mothers who are much too often taken-for-granted in their vital role in raising godly offspring. Though she was herself childless, she continued to promote her idea to others in the years following. When commercialism began to encroach on this special day to recognize and celebrate motherhood, Anna Jarvis became embittered. It has now become a day of obligation for everyone to purchase something for whoever is somehow related to the position of mother be it biological, adoptive, substitute, and generationally up, down or horizontal.

We agree with the original intent of Mother's Day in honoring our moms and saying thank you for your too often upraised work in rearing godly offspring. That is why we took the time this morning to give you special recognition. Your labor with your children is often unnoticed and taken for granted. We live in a society that minimizes your work at home while hyping and glamorizing employment outside the home. You do not get paid to change your baby's diapers. You are not given a bonus or overtime for watching sick children through the night. You do not receive certificates of appreciation for instilling moral values into your home, and there are no award banquets to recognize a job well done in the daily grind of household chores.

For many years I have brought a special message on Mother's Day related to some aspect of motherhood. This morning I am going to broaden that to the incredible worth of a woman in general. It is something that is often misunderstood and/or distorted in our society.

Historical Shift

Historically, it seems that the value of a woman in most cultures was directly related to the number of children she bore and in particular the number of sons. An example of this would be the rivalry between Leah and Rachel in Genesis 29-31 or Hannah's lament that she was barren in 1 Samuel 1. As recently as the early 1900's in America it was common for women to have 4-8 or more children. My dad was one of ten children. That was a large family, but it was nothing unusual for that time. Such large

families are still common in some subcultures in this nation and it is still very common in other nations of the world. However, in the present time in America, if you have more than two children, people look at you like you must be crazy. If you have more than four, some people think you are menace to society causing over population, and too large of a carbon footprint.

Our society as a whole no longer values a woman based on her having children. In fact, children diminish her value in some segments of our society. Children tie her down and limit her ability to pursue other interests. Businesses use the term "mommy track" for those women who place their career in a secondary position to their children. They are then passed over for promotions. Understandably, a business wants its employees who have their minds on their career, not on their homes. They value women based on their ability to earn money for the business.

The rise of feminist thought is at the root of this change in what society values. Career is more important than family. Self interest is more important than self sacrifice. Self fulfillment is more important than serving others. Please understand that feminism has nothing to do with femininity. Feminism actually values masculine traits and scorns feminine traits. Feminist thought has placed women in a horrible position of fighting against God's very design of her, both physically and emotionally. A lot of you ladies are in the middle of this tension between what you feel like you are designed for and the pressure society is placing upon you.

God's Design

Let me make a few comments about God's design. Genesis 2 explains that God fashioned from Adam's rib a female that corresponded to him and was to be a helpmeet. They would cleave together and become one flesh. In Genesis 1:28 records what is referred to as the dominion mandate. Adam and Eve were commanded to *"be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."* Since reproduction is necessary to the fulfillment of that command, God's physical design of a woman is so that she can bear and nurture a baby.

I once read a sports article that explained that anatomical differences made it necessary to maintain separate categories for men and women in various sporting competitions otherwise it would be inherently unfair to one sex or the others. For example, the leg bones of a man are attached more central to the pelvis while the female's is more to the sides. This difference allows the male to have a physically stronger placement of the leg muscles increasing his ability to run. The female's structure diminishes her ability to run, but it greatly increases the inlet area of the pelvis so that she can bear children. If you think childbirth is bad now, you would not even want to think of what it would be like if a woman's skeletal structure was like a man's. Gray's anatomy points out that this difference in bone structure is present before you are even born. It is God's design.

These are facts that seem to be lost to the political correctness rearing its ugly head in some places that is allowing and even mandating that boys with gender confusion can play on women's sport teams and that girls must be allowed to compete directly with the boys even in sports such as wrestling. In rejecting the roles that God has given to men and women they also reject the physical facts that men and women are different. That is why they argue the absurd position that the sex of a person should be determined by a person's mental state and the body should be mutilated by surgery and hormone therapy in the effort to try and match physical anatomy to the mental state. However, that cannot be achieved despite the effort because the skeletal and corresponding muscle structure will remain the same as will the DNA in every single cell of the body.

God has also placed a basic emotional design within the woman to increase her capacity for nurture and support of other people. Men and women are very different emotionally by the design of God. This truth has been common knowledge throughout the ages as every generation has watched its young boys and girls at play which anyone bothering to observe quickly sees is very different from each others. Those differences show up even when great effort is made to minimize them. For example, if you restrict a boy from having any kind of fighting toys such as toy soldiers, guns, swords, and such and instead give him dolls, you find he will not be playing house with them as would his sister. Junior will create a battle scene with them. Commando Ken will be protecting Barbie from the invading Disney Princess dolls. If you give toy soldiers to a girl, she will set them up to care for each other like a large family. She will play house with them. The truth is that boys and girls are different from each other by God's design.

Dangers of Feminism

Feminism fights against God's design in two ways. First, it promotes the idea that a woman's value is directly related to her ability to take on what are more typically male characteristics and succeed in what are more typically male roles. Second, it seeks to emasculate men by training boys that it is wrong to act like men and castigate men that do act like men. Understand then that feminism is in reality anti-woman because its basic premise is that who you are and what you do as a woman is not as important as what men do. Feminism promotes male characteristics not femininity. One man quipped about this, *"Here is to women, once our superiors, now our equals."* Will Rogers stated it this way, *"I'll bet the time ain't far off when a woman don't know anymore than a man."* That is where feminism has taken us.

No wonder so many women are collapsing under the pressure of trying to be super women. They are trying to do all the things that men do while also trying to do what they want as women. The reward they reap are the medical problems that used to be only commonly found among men including ulcers, high blood pressure, heart attacks and nervous breakdowns. God did not design women - or anyone - for that kind of pressure.

The most horrible consequence of feminist thought is abortion. Abortion is not about family planning or birth control or a "*woman's right to chose*." It is about power. The power to control one's future. The power to destroy anything that would interfere with one's desires or pursuit of happiness. This mindset is apparent in the way Norma McCorvey (the "Roe" in Roe vs Wade) was manipulated by the feminists in 1973 and has been treated by them since she became a Christian in 1995. They have treated her with disgust ever since she began to hold pro-life views. In feminism it is the power to control and not the woman that is important.

The quest for power and the anti-family nature of feminism was blatantly exposed by Justice Ginsberg in her dissent to the Supreme Court ruling that upheld the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003. This is a gruesome procedure in which a living third trimester baby is partially delivered, and then the baby's head is crushed followed by extraction. Though this procedure is never medically necessary, Justice Ginsburg argued that banning it would diminish "*a woman's autonomy to determine her life's course, and thus to enjoy equal citizenship stature.*" She found the decision "*alarming*" and objects that "*this way of thinking reflects the ancient notions of the woman's place in the family.*" That ancient notion is the idea that women have the privilege of bearing life and therefore also the responsibility to protect and nurture that life instead of killing it for whatever reason and by any means according to her whim.

That feminism is about power and not women is also seen in their fight against things like informed consent laws and waiting periods for abortions. They would rather keep a women ignorant than have her given the knowledge about what she is about to do and the possible consequences for her. In order to promote abortion they will refer to the life in a woman's womb as an "*it*," a "*thing*," a "*problem*," "*the product of conception*," a "*fetus*," and not a child or a baby, for if the woman believes there is a baby growing within her, she might think of herself as a mother and most will then naturally seek to protect the life of the baby. Then, despite the feminist claim to want "*safe*" abortions, they fight against medical regulation of abortion clinics. The result has been grisly clinics such as the one that was run by Dr. Gosnell in Philadelphia. Their claim of fear of abortionists who are "back alley butchers" is both an historical sham and a present lie for their actions allow the butchers to be on main street.

Abortion is a deadly strike against one of the unique aspects of a woman that sets her apart from all men. It is a distinct feature men will never understand. Men cannot comprehend all that you ladies go through in carrying that child. From the negative side, we do not know the pain, (for which men are grateful), but from the positive side, we do not have the sense you have as the child is growing within you, or the relationship you have with the child long before birth.

The Blessing of Children

The Bible is clear that children are a blessing. Psalm 128:3 describes one of Lord's blessing as "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, Within your house, Your children like olive plants around your table." Psalm 127:3 is even more direct stating, "Behold, children are a gift of the LORD; The fruit of the womb is a reward." Because of this, Christians recognize that women have a very unique value in bearing and raising children despite the views common in our society.

There are many statements in Scripture about the blessings of being a mother. For example, Genesis 24:60 records the blessing given by Rebekah's family as she leaves with Eleazer to journey to Haran and become Isaac's wife, "May you, our sister become thousands of ten thousands, And may your descendants possess The gate of those who hate them." The people of Bethlehem blessed Ruth in a similar way saying, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem. Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD shall give you by this young woman" (4:11-12). The scriptures present children as being a blessing.

But a caution. Children are to be a blessing but raising them is not easy. A mother has a multitude of responsibilities with consequences to how she fulfills them. 1st & 2nd Kings lists the name of the mother of each king mentioned. Why? Because whether the king was good or bad was a reflection of her influence upon him. Children can be either a source of blessing or shame to a mother. Proverbs 23:24, *"The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, And he who begets a wise son will be glad in him. 25 Let your father and your mother be glad, And let her rejoice who gave birth to you."* Proverbs 10:1 states in contrast, *"A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish son is a grief to his mother,"* and 29:15, *"The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."*

A primary reason we have taught parenting classes over the years and will be doing parenting seminars later this month and in June is that we desire to see your kids be a blessing to you and other people. Please understand that our society is now a negative influence instead of a help in this endeavor. You must be diligent to both know and apply the Scriptures in rearing your children, or this society will chew them up and spit them out. Your children are a blessing, a gift from God, and if you raise them correctly, they will continue to be that. If you do not, they will be a curse to you and others.

The woman has an incredible worth in bearing and nurturing her children. She carries with her the ability to either build up or destroy her family and through that determine the course of her society and civilization. That is the meaning of William Ross Wallace's poem *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle is the Hand that Rules the World*. That is an incredibly important position to have.

The Value of a Wife

Does this mean that a woman's worth is contingent on her having children? No! Why? Though children convey a unique value upon her, the Scriptures are also clear that a woman has incredible value whether she has children or not.

Genesis 1 is the record of God's actions on each of the six days of creation. Throughout the chapter God pronounces the various aspects of creation as good. The light was good (1:4); the dry land and the seas were good (1:10); the plants were good (1:12); the Sun, moon and stars were good (1:18); the various kinds of sea creatures and birds were good (1:21); the various beasts that lived on dry land were

good (1:25). The first "not good" is recorded in Genesis 2 which is an expansion of what occurred on day six. After God had created Adam, He said "*It is not good for the man to be alone*." (2:18). God's solution to this "*not good*" was to "*make him a helper suitable for him*." The Hebrew here is hard to translate, but it essentially means "*someone who corresponds to him*." The rest of the chapter describes how God created Eve and brought her to him. God's conclusion to the sixth day after creating Eve is that all that He had made was now "very good" (1:31). The woman is a special creation.

We men do not like to admit it because of our pride, but we need you women. A husband needs his wife. This is demonstrated by the fact that married men live longer and have less stress induced illnesses than single men. God created the man and woman to complement each other so that in a synergistic relationship the sum of the two is greater than the sum of each individual apart. By God's design the woman is uniquely crafted to be part of this.

This is why Proverbs 18:22 states, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the Lord." Proverbs 19:14 adds, "House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the Lord." Proverbs 31:10 adds, "An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels." She is more valuable than any precious material thing. There is truth in the statement that behind every good man there is a good woman. While those who are in the forefront of battle usually get the glory, they can do nothing without the support troops behind them. Or as one female writer described it, "it is true that most of the roles that a woman has are support roles, but if it were not for the columns holding up the roof where would the house be? A good woman makes all the difference in the success and influence of her man. The man at the end of Proverbs 31 could "sit at the gate" and have a role in the leadership of his community only because of all his wife did in the home.

Remember that it is God's design that a man and a woman are a team. They work together. Their roles are not superior and inferior, better or worse. They are simply different and both are vitally needed.

The Value of a Woman Irrespective of Family

Is the woman's value only related to her children or her husband? Not according to Scripture. Here are some examples of women who were important apart from having a husband or children.

Exodus 15 records that Miriam led all the women in worship and praise of the Lord after crossing the Red Sea. Judges 4 records that Deborah was a prophetess and a judge of Israel who, along with Barak, led Israel in a military victory over Jabin, king of Canaan. In that same campaign it was Jael, a woman, who ended up with the victory over Sisera, the general of Canaanite army. 2 Kings 22 records the importance of the counsel king Josiah received from the prophetess Huldah. Luke 2 recounts the story of Anna who was then 84 and had lived most of her life as a widow in the service of the Lord in the temple. She saw Jesus when He was brought to the Temple as a baby, and she became the first to start proclaiming Christ to those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

In Romans 16 Paul specifically mentions Phoebe, Prisca (or Priscilla), Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Julia as co-workers in the Lord. In Philippians 4:3 Paul mentions Euodia and Syntyche who had *"shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel."*

Consider the following as well: Mary was the first to learn of Jesus' coming. She and Elizabeth were the first to praise the Lord for it. It was women that stayed with Jesus throughout His crucifixion, and women accompanied Joseph of Arimetha and Nicodemus when Jesus was buried in order to prepare His body. Women were the first at Jesus' grave and to know about His resurrection and to proclaim it. The first convert to Christ in Europe was Lydia, a woman (Acts 16). The Lord has placed a unique value upon women.

The Bible also affirms women in many positions including business. Lydia was a seller of purple. The Proverbs 31 woman not only had her priorities straight and took care of her family first, but she was also a business woman involved in real estate, manufacturing, and selling her wares. She was busy. God is not anti-woman and neither is Biblical Christianity. However, the Bible does affirm the differing roles for men and women, and women who are affected by feminist thought do not like that. The Bible warns that there are consequences when those differing roles are not followed.

Barak told Deobrah that he would not go fight Jabin, king of Canaan, without her. She told him that she would go, but warned him that the honor would go to a woman instead of him, which is exactly what happened. She did what was right, but Barak bore the shame of his own decision. When men fail to take their proper roles and responsibilities in leading and a woman then rises up to fill the gap, it is to the shame of the men. I often think of this when I get support requests from single women who want to go out as missionaries. I neither fault her nor believe she is wrong in desiring to serve Christ in such a manner. She will have additional hardships, but the Lord can certainly enable her to face and overcome them. Instead, I find it a shame to my gender that there are not more men that will say like Isaiah, *"Here I am, send me."* It is to the shame of men that they are not leading and single women are going out to do their job.

I do not even disparage women who fill in the gaps and take leadership positions in churches because the men are failing to shoulder their responsibilities. It is to the shame of the men who refuse to fulfill their role so that a woman has to step out of her role to fulfill it. It is tragic this has become so common. This also puts her at greater risk of sin in becoming proud or actively usurping and taking over the man's role.

The Source of True Worth in a Woman

All the things I have mentioned so far this morning - children, marriage, business, leadership - are important, but a woman must be careful not to allow any of them to define her value, for any of them could become worthless in the final analysis.

The Proverbs 31 woman was successful in business, but that is not what gave her value. Deborah was successful in a military campaign, but that is not what gave her value. Hannah had children, one of whom was Samuel the prophet, but that is not what gave her value. Elizabeth had a great husband, Zacharias the priest, and bore John, the forerunner of Jesus, but that is not what gave her value. Mary bore Jesus, but that is not what gave her value.

The true worth of a woman is related to her fulfilling God's design for her both as a woman in general and as a unique individual. That same truth also applies to you men, so listen up. The primary design is that she bring glory to God's name. She was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Her life should be about seeking to reflect Christ's image and do God's good pleasure and not her own (Isaiah 46:10). If she fails in this primary purpose, then everything else she does will ultimately be worthless. A successful business that does not glorify God is ultimately vain, futile and pointless. To gain a position of leadership and then not lead in godliness to godly goals is ultimately useless, senseless and foolish. Having a husband that does not share your love for Christ is frustrating enough in itself, but if that is compounded by not living to be a godly influence upon him, then you will find your life is a waste. Having children and then not training them to be godly individuals not only brings shame to you, but will also bring a curse upon society.

The true worth of a woman centers on her faithfulness in knowing and following the will of God. This begins with knowing Him and believing in Jesus Christ. It then continues with developing that personal relationship with her Creator and daily becoming more and more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). It encompasses setting your priorities according to God's will and not your own selfish desires. It is to be God first, then your family, then other people and then yourself. Life is fulfilled in serving God and that also becomes the source of your greatest joy.

Let me quickly add that every spiritual gift is important in the body of Christ. Do not compare yourself to others as to the specific gift, particular ministry or public attention received. You are to simply serve the Lord doing whatever, wherever, whenever, God wants you to do it. In God's economy, changing a baby's diaper downstairs in the nursery is just as important as leading in worship up here if both are truly done for the purpose of glorifying Him. God looks at the heart. Whatever the Lord calls you to do is vital and that is what gives you worth. It is not the worth society places on you, for at best what society values is temporal. It is simply being the Lord's faithful servant. Set yourself to please the Lord and then you will realize your value comes from the infinite God.

Conclusions

What is the worth of a woman? Most of our society tries to find it in all the wrong places. A woman's true worth comes from the infinite God who created her and arises from how well she is fulfilling God's design for her as described in the Scriptures and so is related to her personal godliness, service to God and fulfilling her various roles. So much of this is connected to her relationships with other people that her true worth is impossible to calculate in this life and will not be known until we are heaven. Her worth then is inestimable.

Ladies, don't let this society and the feminist philosophy that has become dominate in so much of it take away from your value as a woman. Find your worth in God and His plan for your life. Rejoice in the fact that God in His infinite wisdom and grace has given you the wonderful privilege of being a woman.

Sermon Notes: *The Incredible Worth of a Woman* Selected Scriptures

Introduction

Mother's Day began in when Anna Jarvis of West Virginia persuaded local church to honor them Commercialization has nationalized Mother's Day and made it a day of **Historical Shift** Historically, a culture's value of a woman was related to children (Gen. 29-31, 1 Samuel 1) In much of our society, having children _____ your value Feminism has changed the for worth to career, self-interest, self-fulfillment, and masculine traits God's Design - Genesis 1 & 2 The dominion mandate: *Be* and multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it; Women are designed to bear and nurture children Women are designed to nurture and support **Dangers of Feminism** It shifts worth to typically characteristics and success in typically male roles - yet it castigates men Basic premise – you're not important unless you do what do. The : ulcers, high blood pressure, heart attack, nervous breakdowns & other stress symptoms Feminist support of abortion is about _____ – not the woman Women are kept ignorant & instead of informed and protected The in her womb is called something other than a baby / child It is a deadly strike against one of the ______ aspects of being a woman The Blessing of Children Psalm 127:3; 128:3 Genesis 24:60 – Rebekah _____ Ruth 4:11,12 Her children reflect her influence – 1 & 2 Kings, Proverbs 23:24-25; 10:1; 29:15 The future of her family & society are in her hands _____ The Value of a Wife Genesis 1 - Creation is _____ Genesis 2:28 - The first "_____" – Adam without Eve Genesis 1:31 - After Eve, Creation was " Proverbs 18:22; 19:14; 31:10 The Value of a Woman Irrespective of Family Exodus 15 - Miriam _____ Judges 4 - Deborah & Jael _____

2 Kings 22 – Huldah the prophetess Luke 2:36 - Anna Romans 16 - Phoebe, Prisca, Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, & Julia **Additional Considerations** First to receive announcement of Jesus' - Mary, then Elizabeth to be at Jesus' crucifixion, burial & grave - Mary & Mary First to receive announcement of Jesus' & proclaim it - Mary M. and other women First ______ in Europe - Lydia Women in ______ affirmed - Lydia, Proverbs 31 God is not "anti-woman" but His word affirms different for men & women Danger of not fulfilling / stepping out of Biblical roles: Men are & Women are put in danger of of pride and actively usurping the man's role The Source of True Worth in a Woman Fulfilling God's for her as a woman and as a unique individual.
Failure in primary purpose results in ultimate
of all else
The true worth of a woman centers on her faithfulness in knowing and following the will of Conclusions Don't let society / feminism take away your inestimable worth as a woman Your worth is found in the infinite who created you & His plan for you Rejoice in the wonderful ______ you have in being created by God as a woman

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help.

Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Count how many times the word "woman" is said. 2) Discuss with your parents what the Bible says about a woman's role in family & society.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. What is the purpose of Mother's Day? Did you thank the various "moms" in your life? Describe feminism in your own words? What do feminists value? What pressure does this put on women in our society? What is God's physical design of a woman? What is God's emotional design of a woman? What basic differences do you find between men and women? Has feminism helped women be better women? How and why do feminists promote and protect abortion? What does God say about children? What influence does a woman have on her children? What happens if the woman fails in her role? How does a woman influence her community? Does a woman have to have children to be valuable - Why or why not? Why did God create Eve (Gen. 2)? What is the effect of a wife on a husband? How important is a "support" role? Husband - Do you honor your wife for her support of you? Wife - Do you fulfill your role willingly or fight against it and usurp your husband? Does a woman have to have a husband to be valuable - Why or why not? Men - are you fulfilling your responsibilities or do women have to fill in the gap to your shame? Irrespective of family, where does a woman find her true value? Men - how are you helping your wife/daughters find their true value? What negative influence has society had upon you?