**MOMS WHO CHANGED THE WORLD, PROV. 31:10-31, 1 TIM. 6:17-19, MAY 14/23**

 Last week we looked at the remarkable things God did through the prophet Elisha. Elisha knew the very words the king of Aram spoke in the privacy of his bedroom. When his army encircled Elisha to capture him, Elisha’s servant was devastated, but Elisha asked God to open his eyes. When he did, the servant saw God’s army of chariots & horses of fire far outnumbering Aram’s army. Elisha asked God to blind the army, then led them all into the city of Samaria. The Arameans were cooked, but instead of killing them, Elisha told the king to feed them. They had a feast, then were sent away & their warring with Israel stopped. **Oh, the grace of God!**

Naaman was healed of his leprosy when he obeyed Elisha’s instruction to wash 7 times in the Jordan River. Naaman had been insulted & enraged when he went to see Elisha because Elisha never even came out of his house, but sent his servant to instruct Naaman. Naaman felt he deserved to have Elisha do a great, public miracle but God’s not 1 for a glitzy show of power.

In response to a Shunamite woman who showed kindness to Elisha, he promised she’d conceive a son, though her husband was old. This happened, but he died a young boy. The woman went directly to Elisha. Elisha, he went to the boy & resurrected him back to life—a sign of what Jesus would do 100’s of years later—though in His own power. **Oh, the grace of God!**

Finally, a widow of a prophet had fallen into indebtedness. Her creditor was going to take her 2 sons to pay her debt. Elisha asked her what she had. Nothing but a little oil. He told her to ask her neighbours for jars & fill them with the oil. The oil never stopped until the last jar had been filled. Elisha told her to sell the oil to erase the debt, then live on what was left over. God is a God of abundance & generosity, not a God of scarcity. **Oh, the grace of God!** Whenever we trust God with gratitude or see life entirely as a gift from God, **we experience firsthand the gift of grace**. Another way we live & love like Jesus did, **is to live generously**.

 Paul says, “Command them (us) to do good, to be rich in good deeds & to be generous & ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, **so they can take hold of the life that really is life**.” Any form of life that isn’t rooted in **generos-ity** & the desire to be rich in good deeds isn’t life at all. That sounds like mothers.

 God did it right when He made mothers. Not everyone enjoys good relations with their mother; yet, mothers are ordained by God for a very special place in the family. No matter how humble moms may see their role, the world is a different & better place because of them.

 Proverbs 31. Who could argue that a woman of noble character is priceless? It’s evident here that the husband & wife are a team. When a woman is noble in character a man, yea, the family can excel. Verse 11 says, with such a woman, a man lacks nothing. **The implication is there’s lots lacking in a man when a woman is not noble.**

 Flax & wool were the trade merchandise of the day. A noble woman is a wise business-woman who works industriously & is a thoughtful manager, who provides for her family in many ways. She’s not limited to insignificant purchases. For the family’s benefit, she may engage in big business deals—she’s considering the purchase of real estate—out of her own earnings, by the way. There’s no suggestion that moms shouldn’t work at paying jobs or that they were to stay home & look after the kids! Nor is that choice wrong or better or worse. **This old writing is pretty current!** She is strong, physically active, works vigorously & profitably. She’s up early & to bed late—always looking out for the needs of her family. She’s well organized & prepared.

She’s compassionate, “opening her arms to the poor & extending her hands to the needy. She’s a planner, not caught short. When clothing’s talked about, it’s not a fashion statement; **the talk is about being clothed with “strength & dignity”; it’s not about fleeting beauty & deceptive charm**. Her conversation is articulate. She’s a learned woman who speaks with wisdom & provides faithful in-struction for those around her. She watches over the affairs of her household. She’s on top of things, tuned in to what’s going on, at the surface & beneath.

Proverbs has a lot to say about women. It ends with a woman of strong character, great wisdom, many skills & great compassion. Some people mistakenly think the ideal Biblical woman is meek, servile & entirely domestic. Not so! This woman’s an excellent wife & mother. She’s also a manufacturer, importer, manager, realtor, farmer, seamstress, upholsterer & merchant. Her strength & dignity do not come from her amazing achievements, however. They are a result of her reverence for God. In our society, where physical appearance counts for so much, notice that her appearance is never mentioned. Her attractiveness comes from her character.

This woman has outstanding abilities. She may not be 1 woman, but a composite portrait of ideal womanhood. She’s not a model to imitate in every detail—your days are not long enough to do everything she does! Instead, see her as an inspiration to be all you can be. We can learn from her industry, integrity & resourcefulness.

Proverbs begins with the command to fear the Lord & ends with a woman who fulfills this command. Her qualities are mentioned throughout the book: hard work, fear of God, respect for spouse, foresight, encouragement, care for others, concern for the poor, wisdom handling money. When coupled with the fear of God, they lead to enjoyment, success, honour & worth. Proverbs shows us how to be wise, make good decisions & live according to God’s ideal. I don’t know if your children & husband rise & call you blessed, but you are blessed & a blessing if you fear the Lord, worthy of acknowledgement—even at the city gate. Moms, you rock!

 Susanna Wesley, the mother of Charles & John Wesley—Charles wrote over 8,000 hymns & John, the renowned theologian & evangelist wrote over 42,000 sermons & 233 books! Suzanna was the last of 25 children! She herself had a much smaller family—only 19 children in 19 years, though only 10 survived. I mention her here because **she was disciplined & faithful**. The disciplined part is pretty amazing. She home schooled her children 6 days a week from 9-12 & 2-5, then bedtime preparations started, followed by dinner at 6, private devotions at 7 & tucked away by 8. I’m not sure if private devotions meant every child received a different devotion; either way it’s astounding enough.

 **Suzanna was a learned woman with a mind of her own**. Her father, a minister, broke away from Anglicanism in favour of Methodism. She embraced Anglicanism. She married Samuel Wesley who had the same theological circumstance. Of disciplining her children, she said: “…subjecting a will is a thing that must be done at once, & the sooner the better, for by neglecting timely correction they will contract a stubbornness & obstinacy which are hardly ever after conquered, & never without using such severity as would be as painful to me as the child.

**Suzanna was also faithful to her family.** Her daily devotions, before *Our Daily Bread*, were 2 hours. Her son John wrote that he “learned more about Christianity from his mother than from all the theologians of England.” She spent 1 hour a week alone with each child to make sure her kids knew the Lord & were growing in their faith. To do that, she had to know them. She also saw it was part of her role as a mother to continue teaching them evenafter they left home. She wrote about life & about God & the way they should live.

Finally, **Suzanna was faithful to God**. Samuel was away during the winter of 1711-12. She felt obligated to provide spiritual training he couldn’t & began Sunday evening services for her children. News of this spread to neighbours, who also came, numbering over 200! Samuel was informed. He suggested she get a man to read these “awakening sermons”. She said if he wasn’t man enough to tell her to stop preaching, she would keep preaching.

**Monica**, the mother of Augustine, arguably the greatest theologian of the 1st 1000 years of Christianity, never took her gaze off Augustine. He lived a worldly life early on. To her, Carthage in North Africa was a despicable, immoral city where her son was further enticed into hedonism during his years of studying & teaching. She regretted the moral cost of early learning that smacked of skeptical philosophy & carnal pleasure. Twice daily she attended church, praying tearfully that 1 day she would see Augustine become a Christian. In spite of asking the bishop to intervene & convince Augustine, he sailed to Rome for more of the same lifestyle. **Though God didn’t grant the request closest to her heart**, **God is able to answer our prayers in ways other than we think to pray.** Augustine was sailing toward several people who would be used to bring him closer to God, to the place where he was ready to follow Christ. Monica & Augus-tine’s younger brother followed him there. When Augustine told Monica of his long-awaited commitment to God, **she was jubilant &** **glorified God, “who was more than powerful enough to carry out His purpose beyond all our hopes & dreams.”**

**Monica & Augustine shared many God-centred conversations,** including a shared vis

ion of heaven. She told him that now that he was a Christian, she felt her work was accomplished. 1 week later she died. Augustine gave full credit to his mother for drawing him God-ward.

**What can Monica teach us?** How about cautioning us to be careful of our children’s acquaintances at an early age, watching out for the danger of corrupting friends? Or reminding us the pursuit of the “right education” or “career path” doesn’t necessarily lead to wisdom. **How long is long enough when it comes to praying for our loved ones to find Christ?** What would happen if you said, “That’s it. I’ve prayed twice a day for 15 years. I’m done. God must not care.

Or how about Jochebed? Who, you ask? Jochebed was Moses’ mother—**who courage-ously trusted God enough to turn to Him, rather than be immobilized by fear** when Pharaoh determined to drown all the young Hebrew baby boys in the Nile River. God staged the scene, using Miriam, Jochebed’s daughter to engage Pharaoh’s daughter so she could get Jochebed to nurse her own child while doing a service to Pharaoh’s daughter who would raise Moses. Though adopted the son of a princess, the major influence in Moses’ formative years was his mother, **who instilled in him a profound faith**. She taught him to love God. Jochebed allowed God to completely transform her fear into creative action. She lovingly handed her child over to another mother, motivated by intense mother-love & faith in God’s plan for her child.

Moms, you change the world by who you are, by building faith in God in your families. When Sanballot taunted Nehemiah to come down from rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, he said, “**Tell them I cannot come down, for I am doing a great work**.” Moms, don’t get dist-racted! In mothering, you’re doing a great work—a great work for the Lord—**living & loving like Jesus did.** In your generosity, thank you for helping us take hold of the life that is really life!