

Mama's Lessons on Kings and Queens

(Proverbs 31:1-9)

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Introduction

On July 22, 2013, Prince William and Kate had their first child and named him George.

It was global news, and the reason for that was simple..

This child, though he was but a day old was now 3rd in line to the throne of England..

Though his grandfather, Prince Charles and his father Prince William are in front of him, George is now set to be king of England one day.

That little baby, who is now a 5 year old boy, is going to be a king of a world superpower.

Yet the thing we forget is that George is just like every other 5 year old on the planet.

He is learning his alphabet, figuring out how to tie his shoes and ride a bike..

He is disobedient and mischievous, and he has to be taught to act like a king.

But what would you teach this little 5 year old in terms of how to be a good king?

Well, I am not sure what William and Kate and a whole army of people are teaching little George, but I do know what they should be teaching him..

Because the final chapter of the book of Proverbs is an entire chapter that details the instruction that a wise and godly mother once gave to her son who later became a king...

And interestingly enough, the mother's instruction to her son could be summed it up in a few words..

Be a godly king and find yourself a godly wife..

And these two lessons really form the outline of this final chapter of the book of Proverbs..

So I entitled this chapter, Mama's Lessons of Kings and Queens..

Now obviously, this instruction to kings is the Lord's instruction but often times, God communicates his truth to children by mothers...

In fact, the NT says that a mother's influence on her children far outweighs a father's influence since she is around more than a working father..

Therefore, a mother's instruction is often what the Lord uses to save children..

And at the last, a mother's instruction plants seeds of salvation in the lives of her children that the Lord uses to one day produce the fruit of salvation...

So what does the mother of Proverbs 31 want her son to know?

Well, it will our treat over the next two weeks to find out in the 31 verses of Proverbs 31..

So, let's begin in verses 1-2 with...

I. A Mother's Dedication (1-2)

Let's read verse 1..

1 The words of King Lemuel, the [a]oracle which his mother taught him:

Like Agur of Proverbs 30, we know nothing of anyone named King Lemuel..

Some Jewish historians maintain that Lemuel is another name for King Solomon..

Therefore, Proverbs 31 is what Bathsheba taught her son about being a king...

Personally, I am not convinced of that view..

Yes, some of the instruction seen here could very well apply to Solomon...

He did have a huge problem with sexual immorality, which is something that this mother warned her son about..

Solomon had 700 wives & 300 mistresses..

So maybe this chapter is an example of this son not listening to his mother.

But for God to use Bathsheba as an example of giving godly wisdom seems odd..

We know that Bathsheba didn't have a great reputation as a wife..

She had committed adultery with David..

She just wouldn't seem to be the model of a godly mother teaching her son..

That is not to say that God can't forgive and restore someone, but she would be an odd choice for sure..

Personally, it doesn't seem that we know who this King Lemuel is..

He could have been a king of another nation whose mother was a true believer in God..

WE simply don't know..

Maybe this is Bathsheba teaching Solomon..

It would fit the pattern of the book of Proverbs which seems to be a lot of David teaching his son..

In the end, it doesn't really matter who this king Lemuel and his mother are..

We simply know that the motherly wisdom is from God..

And I am also convinced that the entire chapter is motherly advice..

Though some separate verses 10-31 from the motherly wisdom of verses 1-9, I see that as a mistake..

First of all, there is nothing in the text that makes a division and then second, who better to offer wisdom on the right kind of wife for her son than a mother..

You better believe that I am going to tell my daughters what an excellent husband looks like...

So with that said, what we see in Proverbs 31 is a mother's dedication to teach and train her son.

And why is she dedicated to do that?

Verse 2...

2

What, O my son?

And what, O son of my womb?

And what, O son of my vows?

What we see here is simply an acknowledgment that this mother had vowed to give her son to the Lord...

You may remember Hannah of 1 Samuel.

Hannah so wanted a son that vowed to God if He gave her one, she would give him back to God..

Well, Lemuel's mother had made the same vow..

This is the son of her vows, her promise to God..

God had given her a son, and now she was preparing her son to serve the Lord..

And so how can a son best serve the Lord, especially a son who will be king?

Well, let's listen to verses 3-9...

We have a mother's dedication and now we see..

II. A Mother's Admonition (3)

Like all godly wisdom, parental instruction is a mix of what to do and what not to do..

Well, this mothers starts with what not to do..

Verse 3..

3

***Do not give your strength to women,
Or your ways to that which destroys kings.***

There is no greater threat to a man in power than his sinful lust for women..

In the case of a king, he has the power to attract women and the power to cover his sin...

But his mother warns him here that giving his strength to women was unwise...

Not only it is sinful to lust, it is destructive..

The idea of strength here is one of time and pursuit..

To spend his strength on women distracted the king from the business that he should have been taking care of..

A king's role never rested and if he wasted his energy on things that weren't important, he would have little energy for the duties that demanded his attention..

Yet many a king and many a man have wasted their strength on sinful involvement with women..

Now clearly, this isn't advice to avoid a wife altogether..

In fact, the rest of the chapter is going to be instruction on what kind of wife to seek..

But it a warning to avoid the sinful purist of women and the immorality that involves...

In fact, many commentators believe that the giving "your ways" in the second half of verse 3 is a reference to inappropriate sexual activity...

And the warning to Lemuel is clear..

Kings cannot be immoral in their behavior..

Not only does it distract from the the task at hand, it leads a heart away from the Lord..

Listen to what the Bible says about Solomon..

1 Kings 11:1-4...

11 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, 2 from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not [a]associate with them, nor shall they [b]associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love. 3 He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. 4 For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not [c]wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

Mothers, warn your sons of the dangers of immoral women...

But also warn them of the dangers of their own temptations to immorality as well..

Model what it means to be a good wife, and they will only have eyes for a wife like their own mom..

However, King Lemuel’s mom isn’t done with what not to do just yet..

Not only should her son avoid immoral women, he also avoid immoral drink..

We can call this..

III. A Mother's Prohibition (4-7)

4

***It is not for kings, O Lemuel,
It is not for kings to drink wine,
Or for rulers to desire strong drink,***

5

***For they will drink and forget what is decreed,
And pervert the [b]rights of all the [c]afflicted.***

Alcohol is always a subject of debate in society and especially in the church.

And the reason for debate is that the Bible never indicated that drinking alcohol is sinful..

In fact, there are people in the Bible who drank wine, even strong wine..

So what happens is that Christians line up under what they have been taught about alcohol by the leaders over them...

As a result, you have Christians that call all drinking a sin and you have Christians that never call drinking a sin..

And then you have everything in between..

Now, we have talked about a biblical approach to drinking before..

And the Biblical view of drinking is real simple..

Drinking alcohol is never called a sin, but drunkenness is always called a sin...

However, there are limitations that the Bible places on who can drink and even when they can drink..

One limitation on drinking is to never do it in front of a weaker brother..

For instance, if a believer with a weak conscience for drinking comes to my house, I shouldn't drink in front of him just to flaunt my freedom to drink...

In that case, my job is to help my weaker brother and not hurt him..

Another limitation on drinking in the Scriptures is placed upon leaders..

They were those in the OT who took what is called a Nazarite vow..

The vow included not cutting one's hair and not drinking any wine or strong drink..

In the NT, one of the qualifications for a leader in the church is not been given to wine..

An additional wisdom principle on who can drink also extends to kings and political leaders as seen here in Proverbs 31..

In this case, Lemuel's mother warns him of the dangers of wine and strong drink.

And why should kings be warned of these dangers?

Well, alcohol impairs judgment..

In verse 5, the danger is that a king may drink and forget the law and actually take advantage of people that the king is supposed to protect..

But not only will alcohol cloud a king's memory, it can also cloud his judgment..

Think of Belsahzzar in Daniel 5..

1 Belshazzar the king [a]held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. 2 When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his [b]father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.

3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. 4 They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

What happened to the king that night?

HE died due to his poor decision making skills..

You may remember King Ahasuerus in Esther 1 who was drinking and asked Vashti to dance, but when she refused, he removed her from her position as queen only to have Esther rise to power and save the Jews..

It was at a drunken feast given by King Herod where the order to kill John the Baptist was given...

Over and over again in the Bible and in history, drunken leaders have made dumb decisions and paid dearly because their judgment were clouded by the effects of alcohol..

If history teaches us anything about kings, it is that rulers and wine don't mix..

And King Lemuel's mother is teaching him to avoid wine if he hopes to be a godly king..

Now in verses 6 and 7, she continues her prohibition against alcohol..

6

***Give strong drink to him who is perishing,
And wine to him [d]whose life is bitter.***

7

***Let him drink and forget his poverty
And remember his trouble no more.***

These verses trouble a lot of people, but they shouldn't.

The Bible never endorses drunkenness and it doesn't endorse it here either..

But the Bible never ignores the benefit of wine..

Paul told Timothy to use some for his stomach issues..

And here, wine benefits the terminally ill because it dulls the pain..

You may have seen rescue dogs in the Alps that have a small wooden container tied around their neck..

Well, the container had brandy in it, and the point of the alcohol was to warm the body of someone trapped in the Alps awaiting rescue..

Or it was to dull the pain of someone who was trapped and dying..

Or it was meant to treat wounds of someone who was injured..

Alcohol has always had medicinal purposes even if it was a dulling of the senses..

You better believe if my dentist had no Novocain to kill the pain before pulling a tooth that I would gladly take a shot of whiskey..

But then there is also the question of the poor drinking to forget their misery that we see here..

What are we to make of that?

Well, this isn't a command for the depressed to drink...

Besides remember that alcohol in large doses only depresses more..

Instead, wine may lift the spirits for a time but ultimately only the joy of the Lord can lift the spirits for eternity..

What we see in these verses are not an endorsement of a life of alcohol and intoxication but a reminder that alcohol is only suited to extreme situations in life.

It should never be a part of normal everyday life, especially the life of a king that needs to think and act straight all the time..

So mama has warned her son about ladies and liquor..

Now that he knows what not to do, she turns her attention to what he must do..

We will call this...

IV. A Mother's Stipulation (8-9)

8

***Open your mouth for the mute,
For the [e]rights of all the [f]unfortunate.***

9

***Open your mouth, judge righteously,
And [g]defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.***

The clear instruction of Lemuel's mom was for him to speak up...

Twice she tells him to open his mouth..

In verse, he is to use his voice to speak up for those who have no voice..

This isn't a reference to the physically mute..

The people can speak here but the idea is that no one listens to the poor and needy's voice..

However, everyone listens to the king's voice, so he must speak for those ignored in society, which would include the poor and sick among others..

But only must he open his mouth for the oppressed, in verse 9 he must also open his mouth to judge those who are taking advantage of the poor...

It is one thing to speak for the poor, but it is another thing to judge those who are gaining by taking advantage of the poor...

Yet, the king has the power to do both..

Not only can he create and pass laws to protect the unfortunate, he can also prosecute those who break the law to profit off the poor...

In other words, a king has the power to defend these who are really defenseless in society..

And Lemuel's mother wants to make sure that her son is filled with a great compassion for those who are under his rule..

You see, power is great if it is used with godly compassion..

But power is dangerous if it lacks the compassion and mercy of God..

Kings can quickly become numb to the needs of those under them..

Rulers can quickly lose compassion for those affected by their decisions..

Yet, the godly king never rises above his people..

Instead, the higher he rises, the lower he stoops to serve those under him..

And who is the great example of compassionate rule?

Well, King Jesus...

He had all power, yet he laid down his life for those under his authority..

While we were sinners, Christ dies for us..

A good and godly king is always filled with compassion for the those living a difficult life..

And where does this compassion come from?

It comes from the fact that he never forgets that everyone, including himself, is made in the image of God..

Conclusion

Next week, mama turns her attention away from the character of the king to the woman behind the king...

And we will get to meet the excellent queen..

Fro now, let's make a couple notes about verses 1-9..

#1 - Parents should be God's mouthpieces.

Parenting is hard, but is necessary.

Those who fail to teach their children the ways of the Lord pass up a golden opportunity to change the world..

Everyone complains about the state of the culture around them, but the best to change the culture is to train the next generation to love and obey the Lord.

God have given you the wisdom of Scripture to speak into the lives of your children and grandchildren.

God has given you the experience of Christian living to speak into the lives of your children and grandchildren.

God has given you the time to speak into the lives of your children and grandchildren...

So don't pass up those opportunities for fear that your children will get mad at you..

Or for fear that they won't listen..

Or for fear that you may teach them wrong..

Look, your kids are being taught something every-day..

They are either learning from the ways of the world or from the ways of Lord..

Make sure that more of the latter is happening...

#2 - Believers should be God's reflection.

Do you think God is an unsympathetic womanizing drunkard?

Well, no.

And neither should those be who claim to belong to Him..

Lemuel's mother did not lay out difficult rules for her son..

She simply asked him to conform his life to God's standard...

God says that marriage is one man and one woman for life...

God says that drunkenness is sinful..

God says that he is filled with compassion for the poor..

Is it really too much to ask that people simply obey the Lord and model who He is?

Well, no..

Yet, there are so many people who see God's standards as restrictions on their freedom..

Nothing could be further from the truth..

God's standards aren't restrictions but protections...

Sexual immorality destroys lives, so flee far from it.

Drunkenness destroys lives, so avoid it.

Lack of mercy and compassion for others destroys life, so be kind and long-suffering and demonstrate the compassion of God..

And when you do those things..

You reflect who God is, and that alone is an attraction to people who don't know the Lord...

And if a king should be anything, he should be a reflection of the God who has put him in a place of power..

And if a Christian should be anything, he should be a reflection of the God who has saved him...

Let us pray.