

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Mom's Week, Part 3: Lemuel's Mother

Scripture: 1 Kings 2:19; Proverbs 1:8; Proverbs 1:20; Proverbs 3:13-18; Proverbs 4:5-9; Proverbs 8:1-9:12; Proverbs 10:1; Proverbs 15:20; Proverbs 31:10-31; Matthew 1:5-6

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The Proverbs 31 description of the virtuous woman is one of the best-known passages in Scripture. What is often overlooked, however, is the origin of the passage. It was written by a king (named Lemuel) who said he learned this wisdom from his mother.

This final chapter of Proverbs contains two poems—the Wise King (Proverbs 31:2-9) and the Excellent Wife (Proverbs 31:10-31)—both of which are attributed to King Lemuel, whom ancient Jewish tradition identified as King Solomon, but who is otherwise unknown. If Lemuel is, in fact, Solomon, that means the mother who taught her son these wise sayings about excellent character was Bathsheba—a woman known more for scandal than virtue. Perhaps Bathsheba taught Solomon about his ancestor Ruth (Matthew 1:5-6), who had a spotless reputation, and then Solomon could have penned Proverbs 31:10-31 with Ruth in mind. After all, the passage parallels Ruth's life in many ways.

Regardless, Scripture does specifically record many instances of Solomon's great respect for mothers and motherhood. For instance, one of the greatest examples of Solomon's wisdom was based on knowing that a mother would never harm her child and would only act in the child's best interest (1 Kings 3:16-28). Throughout the book of Proverbs Solomon frequently advises children to learn from both their parents (Proverbs 1:8; 10:1; 15:20), and he even personifies wisdom itself as a woman (Proverbs 1:20; 3:13-18; 4:5-9; 8:1-9:12).

Furthermore, Solomon always respected Bathsheba, even bowing in her presence (1 Kings 2:19). Whatever Bathsheba's faults—whether or not she was, in fact, the mother of King Lemuel—she clearly helped her son Solomon become a wise man and great leader.

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