

I am more accustomed to others making offerings to me, I must admit. Being the mother of a king does have its advantages. I wasn't sure I would even have anything to offer until I thought of Lemuel. That is my son's name.

He was schooled by the best of the best, of course. But even with the best education that money could buy, I found that there were things that only I could teach him. I wanted him to be a good *man*, not just a good king. I wanted him to learn how to serve with righteousness reaching out to those in poverty and distress. And, so I offer you what I gave to him – instruction.

I schooled him at home in the ways of wisdom. I helped him to know how to be a good king with a good wife, and how to be a good man. I am good at giving instruction. I even created an acrostic to help him remember what I taught – that is I wrote a poem that instructs him in the ways of the virtuous woman and each line begins with a letter following the order of the Hebrew alphabet. He picked it up so quickly that he began making his own acrostics to help him remember things.

You have probably heard my acrostic translated in many ways. My instructions for finding a wife have included words like “virtuous,” “capable,” “perfect,” and “good.” In my original language, I called her, “a woman of worth.”

Who among us is perfect? Who would be comfortable calling ourselves virtuous? Capable? Sometimes. Good? Yes, I hope. But, a woman of *worth*, that really means something to me.

And, that word, “worth,” generally is only applied to our male counterparts. I wanted Lemuel to understand that women are just as worthy as men. We may have different kinds of gifts, but we are just as worthy. I would like to instruct everyone on that point!

Did you know that the word for “woman” and “wife” is the same word in Hebrew? You can understand, then, that for me being a good wife was the same as being a good woman. I know not everyone is called to be a wife. I often wonder now if we should create a new word for woman – a word that truly recognizes the worth of half of God's human creation.

There were things that I shared with Lemuel that were private. These things would have gotten me into trouble had others known. I explained the ways of the world are not always the ways of wisdom, that women are not mere possessions of men to be placed on a bargaining table for kingdoms. My God did not create me for such as that. And, while I could not change the world, I believed I could change my son who then could make a difference. I instructed him as best I could. I leave the rest to God.

Discussion Suggestions - The Virtuous Woman

- ✦ When we think of someone who has the gift of instruction, who typically comes to mind? Invite the women to name these people out loud (Example: teachers, pastors, parents, doctors, etc.) Almost everyone at some point in their life instructs others in how to do something.

In our monologue today we hear from King Lemuel's mother about the ways she instructed her son to become a good and wise man and king. One of the areas in which she instructed him was what to look for when seeking a wife, a virtuous woman.

Many of us ladies read Proverbs 31:10-31 as a measure of what we should be as a wife and mother. I would venture to say that many of us feel inferior upon reading those verses for we probably fall short in some aspects of being this "virtuous woman."

Instead of reading it in terms of how we should be all the time, look at the words instead as encouragement to us as to how we could be if we were to place God above all else in all we do, to be "a woman who fears the Lord" (verse 30).

King Lemuel's mother writes these things to her son in the form of an acrostic poem, using each letter of the Hebrew alphabet at the beginning of each line. Have your group write an acrostic poem using one (or more!) of the ideas below:

- ✦ Using the alphabet or your group name (Joy Circle, First C.P. Church CPWM, etc) describe your group and how your group serves God. Publish it in the church newsletter, bulletin, post it on the bulletin board, etc.
- ✦ Collect the names of all the high school age (or graduating senior, etc) girls in your congregation. Using their names write an acrostic poem that encourages and instructs them in their walk with Christ. Make sure each girl receives a copy of the poem you've created for her.
- ✦ If you have women who are no longer able to come to Women's Ministry meetings due to health, write an acrostic poem of encouragement and appreciation for them using their names. Again, be sure to give them a copy.

PRAYER:

Close with a sentence prayer, inviting each woman to take a turn saying a short prayer of thanksgiving for the instructors in their lives who have taught them how to be the hands and feet of Christ.