

Like father, like son * Psalm 112

June 18, 2023 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

When we did our Women and Work Bible study, we spent a chunk of time talking about the 'ideal woman' in Proverbs 31 (the Proverbs 31 woman that we talked about on Mother's Day) and as we were wrapping up, I offhandedly said 'it's too bad there's no Proverbs 32 man.'

Right? If there's a Proverbs 31 woman, there should probably be a Proverbs 32 man. But there's not. There's no Proverbs 32. But then I got to thinking, the whole book of Proverbs is really about 'how to be a godly man' so you just have to tip the book of Proverbs on its side and shake it down you'd end up with what it means to be a 'good man in God's eyes.'

I thought about doing that for our Father's Day message – pulling verses from the Proverbs to make my own Proverb – but the danger there is making the proverbs say what I want to say. I'd rather have something already there in the text. And lo and behold, as getting ready for today, I realized that there IS a Proverbs 32 man. He's just not in the Proverbs; he's in the psalms, specifically Psalm 112. Join me in the Psalms, Psalm 112.

Psalm 112 would be right at home in the book of Proverbs – it is 'wisdom literature' just like the book of Proverbs and it's actually built exactly like Proverbs 31. Remember how 'the ideal woman' passage in Proverbs 31 is an acrostic? Each line starting with the next letter of the alphabet? Guess what else does that? Psalm 112. You can't see it in English but every line starts with 'a, b, c' and so on.

And the two acrostics – man and woman – are linked thematically too. Proverbs 31 starts - 10 A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. And Psalm 112 starts - Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands (Psa 112:1 NIV).

These poems are about ideal men and women in God's eyes and so this morning for Father's Day, we're going to think about what means to be an 'ideal man' according to Psalm 112.

And again, I think it's important to do this because just like with women, our culture has its own ideas about what makes an ideal man. Think about it. Picture the 'ideal man' in our culture's eyes and who do you see? Tim Taylor from *Home Improvement*? Remember him? Loves tools, loves sports, loves cars, loves supercharging his lawnmower.

And this idea is not just a secular one; there are Christians who hold it too.

I actually googled 'Proverbs 32 man' to see if anybody else had thought about this and sure enough, I found a number of people. Here's a quote from one of them:

He's not afraid to get his hands dirty. He tries to change his brake pads and enjoys whittling wood, even if he's not good at it... He looks sharp and dresses appropriately for the occasion

without relinquishing who he is at his core. So, he probably keeps his sideburns, but tucks in his shirt and doesn't mind looking fashionable when the time is right. And let's be honest, flannel is always in.ⁱ

You know the stereotype, right? But is that what God calls the ideal man? Psalm 112 gives us our answer so let's go there and think about what makes 'an ideal man' from God's point of view.

So Psalm 112, starting in verse 1 says:

NIV Psalm 112:1 Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands.

'Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands' is the thesis statement for this psalm. Right off the bat, the psalmist answers our question – what is an ideal man in God's eyes? An ideal man is one who fears the LORD and delights in His commands.

Now let's talk about this for a minute because 'fear' here doesn't mean fear as in 'fear of heights' or 'fear of Bigfoot.' I remember being a kid and reading about Bigfoot in an Owl magazine and being absolutely terrified that this big ape-man was going to come out of our windrow and snatch me up.

That's not the fear we're talking about here. The fear we're talking about here is awe and reverence; it's honouring God with the admiration and deference that His holiness and perfection deserve. The fear of the LORD is recognizing that God is God and I'm just a man, created by God's hand, and honouring Him with the reverence that that relationship implies.

Robert Davidson puts it like this: "This is no negative dread – a 'you better obey God or else' attitude – but a gladly given response which recognizes that here [in right relationship with God] is where the true secret of the fulfilled life is to be found."ⁱⁱ

The ideal man 'fears the LORD' and is blessed in doing so.

The second part of this verse, the parallel line in this verse, expands what it means to fear the LORD in practical terms – you're going to see that a lot in this psalm. Hebrew poetry is actually full of parallelism – they didn't rhyme sounds like we do in our poetry, they tended to rhyme ideas and so one line reflects or expands the previous one.

And that's what's happening here. Revering the LORD means delighting in His commands. It means embracing God's ways as a way of life and finding joy in obedience to God. Some people want to paint God's commandments as shackles that inhibit their freedom, but in reality they are the guard rails that keep us on the straight and narrow that leads to life. So if you fear the LORD and revere Him by embracing His commands you are blessed, you are an 'ideal man.'

That's verse 1; verse 2 shows us what happens when we do that:

2 His children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright [man] will be blessed.

3 Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.

One of the key ideas in this psalm is that revering the LORD and walking in His ways makes a person holy, makes a person righteous. When you follow Jesus in the ways of the LORD, not turning from it or getting distracted from it, you grow in righteousness, in essential goodness...

And that can't help but impact your children. When a man is faithful to the LORD, when he walks in His ways, he sets a godly example for his children and sets them up for success in the world. God works through our actions as parents to show our children right and wrong, how to act in the world, how to treat other people and our kids inevitably grow up thinking that what we do is normal. All things being equal, an upright man will set for his kids an example of uprightness to walk in.

I can't help but think about Susan Zuidema here talking about generational poverty – people who have gotten stuck in the cycle of substance abuse and domestic violence and their children growing up to continue the cycle. As Christians, we want to see that cycle broken, but we also want to set our children up as people of integrity, people of influence in the world, and what does it take to do that? It takes integrity and righteousness in our own lives. And that means honouring God for all that He is worth.

When we do that, our children will be blessed and according to verse 3, 'wealth and riches are in his house and his righteousness endures forever.' Now that doesn't mean that we'll all be millionaires but it does mean that God will provide enough and even MORE than enough. And that's going to come into play later so just put this verse on the back burner for a minute.

So when a godly man reveres the LORD, his children are blessed and his needs are cared for.

And then verse 4,

4 Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.

When you read verses 1-3, it might be easy to think that 'revere the Lord, walk in His ways and everything will be hunky-dory' but this verse here disabuses us of that idea. Darkness sometimes settles in on godly people. You can follow the Law of the Lord to a T and you still get rained on. But this verse says that even then, even in darkness, God shines His light to light the way for the upright man.

Now here's the thing. That's true and that's the way that most Bibles translate that verse but there's another way to read it. Because this verse literally says: 'It or he – rises – in the darkness – the light - to the godly ones.' Our Bibles take it that it's the light that's rising here

but it's just as likely that it's the godly who is doing the rising AS A LIGHT for other people to see.

I saw a few commentators put it like this: 'He will rise as a light in the darkness for the upright ones, he is gracious and compassionate and just.'ⁱⁱⁱ

That makes sense to me because of the parallelism in Hebrew poetry I told you about earlier. If the second phrase is about the man, the gracious, compassionate and righteous man, then it makes sense to me that the first phrase would be about him too.

Which means then that the ideal man becomes an example to all those around him. He actually becomes a light shining in the darkness.

But listen, he's not just shining a light on his own character; he's not just showing off on Instagram how good HE is. He's actually reflecting the character of God. Did you notice in verse 4 it says that he is 'gracious and compassionate (and righteous)'; who else is gracious and compassionate? The LORD.

If you slide your finger up to psalm 111, verse 4, what does it say? The LORD [Himself] is gracious and compassionate. Psalm 111 and Psalm 112 belong together (both are acrostics) and our psalm presents the godly man as reflecting the character of God. Remember how it said in verse 3 of 112 that 'the man's righteousness would endure forever'? Look at verse 3 – '3 Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever.'

The author of our psalm has connected it to psalm 111^{iv} (also an acrostic by the way) to make a very important point. The ideal man reveres the LORD... and reflects His character. He rises as a light to shine in the darkness, not just as a demonstration of his own goodness but as a reflection of God's goodness. It's what Jesus said in Matthew 5 – Let your good deeds shine before men so that they may see them and praise God, recognizing that your goodness is a reflection of His.

That's the central idea of this psalm: The ideal man then reveres the LORD and reflects His character.

And from this point on in this psalm, we're going to see the various aspects of His character.

I'll combine a couple here: verse 5 - 5 Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely... Skip down to verse 9 - 9 He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever; his horn will be lifted high in honor.

The ideal man reveres the LORD and reflects His character by being generous.

The ideal man is not tight-fisted with his resources; he's not caught up in using his funds for his own benefit. He makes good financial decisions so that he can use his resources for the benefit

others. He invests in people, he gives to those in need, he gives to development agencies who help people to succeed. In fact, remember back in verse 3: 'There will be riches and wealth in his house?' God blesses the righteous man with riches and wealth SO THAT he can spread those riches around. God gives those riches and wealth to be scattered abroad as gifts. The ideal man then reveres the LORD and reflects His character by being generous.

The ideal man reveres the LORD and reflects His character by being just. That's verse 5:

5 Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice. (Psa 112:5 NIV).

The ideal man acts justly. Righteousness as a concept is a bit abstract but when you put it into action, it's justice. It's acting with fairness and integrity; it's not shortchanging people or advancing yourself at the expense of others. The ideal man is accountable and reliable; he doesn't cut corners or settle for the world's way of doing things; he makes God's Law His ethical foundation. The ideal man reveres the LORD and reflects His character by acting justly.

And finally, the ideal man reveres the LORD and reflects His character by being steadfast.

Look at verse 6:

6 Surely he will never be shaken; a righteous man will be remembered forever.

7 He will have no fear of bad; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.

8 His heart is secure, he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.

The ideal man reflects God's character by being steadfast because he knows he can count on God. Verse 7 is the key - his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. The ideal man is not trusting in his own strength; he does what he can to provide for his family and prepare for contingencies, but in the end, he's trusting in the LORD with all his heart and leaning not on his own understanding, but leaning on the everlasting arms of God. He is secure knowing that no matter what, God will triumph in the end. The ideal man is confident because He is standing on the rock solid foundation of Jesus.

The ideal man reveres the LORD and reflects His character by acting confidently.

The psalm concludes: 10 The wicked man will see and be vexed, he will gnash his teeth and waste away; the longings of the wicked will come to nothing (Psalm 112:1-10 NIV).

By contrast, the ideal man reveres the LORD and reflects His character by being generous, just and steadfast.

Now let's think about this because the stereotype of the ideal man in our culture is 'manliness.' It's hunting, it's tools, it's growing a beard. It's about being self-sufficient and macho and strong.

And yet what does this psalm say? The ideal man doesn't trust in his own strength; he reveres the LORD and relies on Him. He doesn't delight to do whatever HE wants; he delights to do the things that God wants. He reveres the LORD and reflects His character by being generous and just and steadfast.

Frankly, I think our culture's picture of manliness is more John Wayne than Jesus and that's a problem because in God's eyes, it really comes down to this – revering the LORD and reflecting HIS character.

Guys, if we're going to be godly men, then we have one job – delight in the Lord and do things like He would.

And I think that it really comes down to this:

Like Father, like son.

As I walk with the LORD, I want to honour Him the way I honour my own father; even more so because He is my Heavenly Father! He scooped me out of my own unrighteousness and made me righteous through Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross. Because of that, I am now His son. 1 John 3:1 – Behold what love the Father has lavished upon us that we should be the children of God – and that is what we really are!

God is my father and so I want to honour Him, respect Him, revere Him and reflect the goodness of His character into the world.

Like father, like son. I want people to look at my actions, my behaviour and say 'he looks just like his father.'

So that means being generous – using the blessings that God has given me to be a blessing to other people. It means that I'll happily lend my snowblower or my lawnmower to my neighbour; sometimes I'm even going to mow their lawn for them! I realized this week that Paul actually quotes this psalm to make this point. 2 Corinthians 9, Paul is talking about giving to support other Christians and he quotes our Psalm (v. 9) 9 As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God (2Co 9:9-11 NIV).

Honour the LORD and reflect His character by being generous.

Honour the LORD and reflect His character by being just – treat your family and colleagues fairly; don't play favourites. If I'm honouring God, I'm not going to shortchange my employees or take advantage of my employer. I'm going to be as honest and honourable as Jesus is.

And I'm going to honour the LORD and reflect His character by being steadfast – not worrying about my retirement fund or the way the world is changing around me. God is never going to change and I am founded on Him and so I'll act with confidence and steadfastness so that people will see that my Father is trustworthy and true.

Revere the LORD and reflect His character.

ⁱ <https://www.theedgescollective.com/home/2018/5/9/a-proverbs-32-man#:~:text=A%20good%20man%20is%20hard,and%20family%20all%20life%20long.>

ⁱⁱ Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A commentary on the book of Psalms*, 370.

ⁱⁱⁱ W. Dennis Tucker & Jamie A. Grant, *Psalms, vol 2*, NIVAC, 612; see also Goldingay, *Psalms vol 3*, BCOTWP, 311.

^{iv} The relationship between Psalm 112 and Psalm 111 is obvious and close. Their external forms are similar. Psalm 112, like Psalm 111, is an acrostic poem of twenty-two measures, each measure beginning with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The measures tend to be composed of three Hebrew words or bound expressions. Words, phrases, and even an entire clause from Psalm 111 are repeated in Psalm 112...

The dependence of Psalm 112 on Psalm 111 is a literary signal that the second is meant to be read, interpreted, and used in relation to the first. The relationship guides the interpretation of Psalm 112 in important ways... (James Mays, *Psalms Interpretation Commentary on Psalm 112*).