

The Grace to Manage Marriage, Motherhood, and Mission

I would love to start this piece with an inspirational quote about being a wife, mother, and pursuing a career. You know the quote I'm talking about. It pops on your social media feed and inspires you to work and love harder. It gets you motivated to get up and start a business, run a 5k, or build your personal brand. Sometimes, it's even informative telling you how to get sleep with a newborn, get that same baby walking by seven months, and then have them reading novels by a year old.

In fact, I would love to tell you an inspirational secret to balancing relationships and career. But the truth is, and listen closely, the secret is in His strength. I have found that all I have is my reliance on the grace of God and His promise that it alone is sufficient.

“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

2 Corinthians 12:9 (NKJV)

Like no other relationships I have ever been in, marriage and motherhood have activated unimaginable strengths while revealing incredible weaknesses. As for many of you, there are days a nursing baby is in one arm and a laptop is in the other. There are days when nap times are few and far between and I find myself frustrated and exhausted by 2 pm. To top it off, there are days when my husband and I are so in sync that we start and finish our first and second books together. But then there are days we can barely get a long due to some small argument neither of us remembers the cause for. There are days I'm glad I moved to Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia to pursue my career. Then when my grandmother and uncle passed within months of one another I couldn't help but regret leaving home.

Myth or Mandate?

The reality is, while most Christians hold up Proverbs 31 as the standard for a well-rounded woman whose example should be emulated, few consider what it really takes to replicate her. We often fail to imagine that more than likely she did not become that woman overnight. In fact, I would go so far as to say that she, too, relied on grace to move her throughout the day with wisdom, composure, and love.

As women after God's heart, we want to be everything we can be to our husbands, our children, our employers, ourselves, and most importantly to our God. The Proverbs 31 woman wanted the same. In fact, Solomon writes that *“she...rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants. She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard...She extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy...She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.”*

This woman was intentionally rising every morning to cook and feed her family and her servants. Then she'd take care of business earning and income and increasing profit for her household. Only to also take care of the needy in

her community.

No woman finds the rhythm to do this overnight. She does not learn these skills in a moment. No, she needed the grace of God to train her and strengthen her over time. So be patient with yourself.

God is gracing you to manage your marriage, motherhood, and your mission.

Managing Marriage

In order for Solomon to say, *“her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her”* there had to be grace for her to grow into all of these roles. She had to learn how to love her husband. This “virtuous wife” as she’s called in the text had to learn how to hear criticism from her husband as well as learn to listen with him. She had to learn how to raise children with her husband, and even build a business with him. Each of these tasks require a different kind of communication. New language to express needs and concerns. With grace and commitment to the process, any couple can experience the kind of spiritual oneness that God speaks of in Genesis. But the fact of the matter is, we all must first receive that such connection and understanding doesn’t happen overnight. This type of knowledge doesn’t come just because a wedding occurred. This type of joining together, this kind of oneness, only happens when two people decide to truly submit to one another. It comes when two people rely on grace to cover their imperfections.

Managing Motherhood

But not only did God have to give the Proverbs 31 woman the grace to learn how to love and work with her husband. He also had to teach her how to love her children. Most people don’t talk about the transition from being a woman without children to one who is blessed with the gift of motherhood. But it really is a transition that requires a lot of hard work, both mentally and physically.

Children come with no manual, guidebook, or attendant. As someone told me, parenting is the sharpest learning curve you will ever experience in your life. This is because you have to learn your child. You have to take note of his or her tendencies, personality, likes and dislikes, and fears and insecurities. The moment they enter the world you are discerning what strengths and weaknesses they’ve gained from you and your husband. In other words, motherhood is a job that only God can grace you to do well. And I believe He designed it that way intentionally.

Depending on God

See, God looks for our complete dependence on Him. The “strong black woman” stereotype isn’t just problematic because it flattens the totality of black women’s love, hurt, grief, or passions. The “strong black woman” stereotype is harmful because it denies her need for God in everything – even the day to day.

The truth is we need God to help us build our personal brands. We need God to help us strategize for growth in our businesses. We need Him when we feel like our friendships are falling to the wayside, and we need Him when we’re raising babies and beyond. Marriage, motherhood, and mission all require our

dependence on God.

If we're honest, in our own strength, we cannot be everything to everyone. You can't be the perfect friend, perfect entrepreneur, perfect wife, or perfect mother. But here's the good news: God doesn't expect you to be. He created you to need Him. Whatever the world may say, whoever the world may show you to be, every relationship, even the one with yourself, needs God. Let the Holy Spirit speak into every aspect of your life. Let God activate His presence and His power so that you can be all that He has called you to be.