



Of the 2.7 million people who saw a job posting by a Boston agency for a Director of Operations position, only 24 people applied. That's likely because of the brutal requirements. A website posted the job and paid for ads, hoping to get the right applicant. So what is required from the right applicant? Here's the entire list:

- Must be able to work 135+ hours a week
- Ability to work overnight, associate needs pending
- Willingness to forego any breaks
- Work mostly standing up and/or bending down
- Must be able to lift up to 75 lbs. on a regular basis
- Ph.D. in psychology or real-life equivalent
- Crisis management skills a must
- Ability to manage a minimum of 10-15 projects at one time
- Ability to communicate at all levels (basic to advanced)
- Proficient in handling sticky situations (literally and figuratively)
- Ability to coordinate multiple, often conflicting, schedules
- Ability to make independent decisions on behalf of others
- Ability to work with associates with minimal ability
- Ability to work in a chaotic environment
- Frequent travel; minivan driving experience a plus
- Flexible when it comes to surprise requests
- Demonstrated knowledge and experience in negotiating, counseling and culinary arts
- Unlimited patience
- Understanding of social media, mobile devices and video games
- Understanding of finance
- Understanding of medicine
- Selflessly driven
- Valid driver's license, CPR certification and Red Cross membership
- Ability to wear several hats, professional and domestic
- Positive disposition at all times

Those requirements all for a job that pays \$0. What job am I talking about here? Mothers of course!

If all that is true and a real job description for motherhood, why does it seem that mothers get very little encouragement and support today? The attacks on motherhood come from outside

and from within. Our society often undervalues and downplays the role of motherhood. The pressure to do it all leaves many women constantly feeling overwhelmed and guilty. Here on the Peninsula, since a majority of women work outside the home, there is a continual feeling I hear from moms that they never feel like they are doing a good job either at work or in the home. On Pinterest, every home seems to be cleaner, better organized and more hip than yours. Mommy blogs often add fuel to the fire of a mother's feeling that she is never doing it right or not doing enough. Pick up a Christian book on motherhood or parenting and many often make you feel even more pressure. It's no wonder why more and more women are getting married later in life and choosing not to have kids. Who can live up to it all?

I realize too that Mother's Day can be really hard for many women. If you're single or struggled with infertility or lost your mother recently, you're trying to endure Mother's Day, not enjoy it. I get that. My hope and prayer is God's Word will encourage you today and remind you of the kind of woman God created you to be. This also means that men, you don't get the day off from listening to the sermon either! All truth is God's truth and there will be plenty here for you to chew on.

As we continue our series, Building a Home: One Room at a Time, the room of the house we are considering today is the Dining Room. I know in my home my wife's greatest strengths are seen in this room. Whether it's having friends over for dinner, helping our kids with homework, or preparing for the Women's Bible Study, it all happens at the dining room table. As we look at the role of women and mothers, I want us to go back to the creation of the first woman—Eve—and see what God said about her. We'll then look at the ideal woman painted in Proverbs 31. Let's look first at the creation of Eve.

### **The First Woman**

**Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26–27).**

One of the first activities we see God doing in the Bible is creating. The word in the Hebrew language is *bara*. It is used three times in Genesis 1 and is only used for God's activity in the entire

Bible. God has amazing creative power and a wonderful imagination; just look at the variety of plants, animals, fish, and wildlife. God is not boring! And the pinnacle of his creation is man and woman.

### **Women are created in the image of God**

The first truth we learn about women (and men) in the Bible is that they were created in the image of God, the *Imago Dei*. To be created in the image of God means several things. Like God, we were created to be in fellowship and community with others. God said, "Let us." God lives in perfect community—the Trinity. God is one, but he is Father, Son and Spirit. One "what" and three "who's." God created us with a deep need for one another. It was not good for Adam to be alone. Neither is it good for you to live in isolation or apart from the body of Christ. We all need each other.

To be created in the image of God means we reflect God's likeness. The Hebrew word for image is *tselem*. To be created in God's image, God's likeness, means we reflect and represent someone else. In the ancient world a king would put statues of himself all over his empire. They represented his image and his rule. Those statues marked off the king's territories. It was as if the king was present even though it was a statue. In the same way we reflect God. We are not God, but we are like him. We are created in his image morally, spiritually, mentally and relationally.

Humanity's purpose is to not only represent God but to rule for him as well, "*so that they may rule over the fish...the birds...the livestock...the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.*" As a fisherman I love this verse. I try to rule over the fish as much as possible! As God's representatives our purpose is to rule over all that God has created. Both men and women together are to care for the earth. Being created in the image of God means that we rule the earth as God would rule it. We are managers of God's creation. We treat the earth and its people as God would.

### **Women are equal but different**

God created us in his image both "male and female." This means that men and women are made equally in God's image. Both men and women reflect God's character in their lives. Men alone don't reflect all God's image, nor women alone. But, together they reflect him. Men and women are equally important to God and equally valuable to him. Just as the members of the Trinity are equal in their importance but as distinct persons, like men and women, they have different roles. The New Testament teaches for example that spiritual gifts are given to both men and women. But how those gifts are used can look very different. We are equal in personhood, but are given different roles. God has invested his image in men and women and placed us on display for the world to see.

Women are equal but different than men. You have to understand that this was radical thinking in the ancient world during the time Moses wrote Genesis. Most believed only the king was made in the image of God, not people, especially not women. In the creation account, God tells his people, through Moses, that the crown of his creation is humanity. Human beings are the only creatures who reflect and are like God. When the Creator of the universe wanted to create something "in his image," something more like himself than all the rest of creation, he made us. He made you. Ladies, where do you find your self-worth? In popular culture or God's Word? Where do you find your significance? In what people say about you, your performance or in what God says about you? Women, you are created in the image of God. That means you are valued, treasured, honored, and loved by your heavenly Father.

Before Eve was created, there was a big problem—Adam was alone.

**The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18).**

God created Adam with an unmet need—he was alone. Everything God created was good, but man alone was not good. My wife has been out of town for four days. It has been **not good** for me to be alone! I need her! God then showed Adam his need.

**Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found (Genesis 2:19-20).**

Adam had to go through the process of naming the pairs of animals so that he would recognize his need for a woman. I think he was oblivious! Adam began to see that the animals had each other. He also began to see that none of them would be a good companion for him. I imagine him saying, "That won't work, that won't work, not that either."

God provided for Adam's need by creating Eve.

**So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man (Genesis 2:21-22).**

Imagine Adam after seeing a bunch of animals waking up to find a naked woman standing in front of him with some very pleasurable qualities! Adam was stunned. Men were formed from the dust of the ground. At a basic level, God picked up some dirt from the ground and threw Adam together. But when God made a woman, he created her with his own hands. He took his time

crafting and molding her. The word is “build,” and used in the sense of building a house, temple, city or altar. Tony Evans said, “A woman made in the image of God should never settle for being treated as anything less than an image-bearer of the one true King.” Adam was thrown together; women were fashioned.

### **Women are called to be “helpers”**

The distinct role for Eve was to be a “helper” for Adam.

**The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18).**

Now ladies, before you get out of your seat and leave, let me explain what this image means. The word for helper does not imply that women are subordinate to men. As we’ve already seen, women are equal to men in personhood and importance. Both men and women are mutually dependent on each other. Some people have taught that “helper” means women are supposed to help a man fulfill his dreams and desires only. Not true. On the other hand this does not mean that women are to be completely independent from men. The key to understanding this word “helper” is to understand this: “helper” is a word only used in the Old Testament for God himself. Sixteen out of the 19 times “helper” describes God himself. God as our helper does not mean that he is subordinate to us. Not at all! This word is meant to be a great compliment to women. Women are an essential to God’s design for marriage and for our world.

Eve’s first calling was to God, to fulfill his purpose for her life, which was to help Adam. Her role as helper was not just a role of companionship, it also included ruling/managing the world with Adam. First and foremost a woman, as an image bearer, is created for God’s work. Your life, through him, ought to be one of great purpose, spiritual power and possibilities. God could have used many words to describe a woman, but he chooses a word that only describes himself—helper. That’s pretty amazing.

So there it is, the biblical account of the creation of woman. Women are created in the image of God. Women are equal to men but different (thank God!). And women have the divine title of helper. What does the Bible say about the ideal woman?

### **The Ideal Woman**

How does our culture define an ideal woman? It’s like the little book I found on Amazon with the title, *I am a Woman, I am Invincible, I am Tired*. The average woman in America sees about 3,000 ads each day, many of which send messages about what the “ideal” female body should look like. But 98 percent of American women are not as thin as the fashion models who supposedly have the right body type. The average American woman is 5’4” and weighs 165 pounds. The average Miss America winner is 5’7” and weighs 121 pounds. It’s not surprising, then, that 42 percent of 1st-3rd grade girls want to be thinner. 81 percent of 10-year-old girls are afraid of being fat. 70 percent of

18- to 30-year-old American women don’t like their bodies, and 60 percent of women in middle age still remain unsatisfied with their bodies. 50 percent of girls use unhealthy weight control behaviors, such as skipping meals, vomiting, and taking laxatives. Nearly 20 million women will suffer from an eating disorder at some point in their lives. The ideal woman is a myth! Everyone is trying to be her, but like a mirage, once you think you get there, the ideal is gone. As one pastor’s daughter said, “Just like Eve, we women tend to spend more time analyzing what we are not or what we don’t have than recognizing who we were created to be.”

Proverbs 31 is a famous and infamous portrait of what some consider to be the ideal woman. You know, I’ve never found a parallel chapter for men as Proverbs 31 is for women. I think that means men need a whole Bible to get it right, while women just need a chapter! Some women despise the Proverbs 31 woman and feel they just can’t live up to it. In the book, *Captivating* by John and Stasi Eldredge, they write, “We’re all living in the shadow of that infamous icon, The Proverbs 31 Woman, whose life is so busy I wonder, does she have time for friendships, for taking walks, reading good books? Her light never goes out at night? When does she have sex? Somehow she has sanctified the shame most women live under, biblical proof that yet again we don’t measure up. Is that supposed to be godly—that sense that you are a failure as a woman?”

The Proverbs 31 woman sets a high standard—she is strong, intelligent, capable, giving, resourceful, efficient, spiritually minded, and much more. I am not a woman and I know I can’t live up to that. But the ultimate standard for how to be a woman or a mother is not Proverbs 31, it’s Jesus. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, our goal in life is to be like him, not Proverbs 31. Instead of making any mom or woman feel any more stress about being a woman or a mom, as if I know much about that, I want to look at just two verses that encapsulate the ideal woman. It’s found in Proverbs 31:30-31,

**Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.**

### **The ideal woman fears the Lord**

Charm is deceptive and beauty doesn’t last, but what’s rock solid about a woman is that she fears the Lord. Fearing God means to take him seriously. It’s to take what God says and what he requires and make them numero uno in your life. To fear God means to have a high view of God. After writing a long list of the ideal woman, the writer says all of that is nothing compared to fearing God. Her fear of the Lord determines her actions, thoughts, words, and priorities. Without that, the demand of life would overwhelm any woman. When a woman

understands who she is and how God made her, watch out, big things will happen.

How does a woman fear the Lord? Like most things there are extremes. Some view God like an angry dictator. God is mean, punitive and capricious. He can't be trusted and is just waiting for us to do something wrong so he can discipline us. Others view God as a hard task master. Like a tough boss, God wants us to conform to all his rules and so we try our best to be really good. This view of God leaves people scared of him. God intimidates them. On the extreme other side are people who do not fear God at all. God is my buddy, my best friend, my homeboy. We bring God down to our level, making him more like us and less than the God of the Bible. Those people say, God loves me just as I am, which is true, but he doesn't want you to stay there. His grace is turned into a free pass to sin because God will always forgive me. Again, true but misguided.

Just as a wrong fear of God can drive you from him, a right fear will drive you to him. To fear God is to revere him. It's to stand in awe of him, to have a high and holy view of him. When Isaiah the prophet saw the Lord, those beings worshipping God were singing, "Holy, holy, holy." It's the only attribute of God repeated three times in the Scriptures. It's the Hebrew way of saying, God is absolutely holy. Nothing or no one else even comes close! To be a Christian means we are in the process of becoming more like Jesus, which means we are becoming more Holy. If God is holy, if he lives in unapproachable light, if he is the author of life and the judge of all, then we should fear and revere him. We take him seriously, not ourselves.

To fear God is to understand that he is not like you. There is no one like him. He has power to speak and the world was formed. He has power to give life and take it away. He has power to knit a child together in a woman's womb. He has power to ordain the amount of days a person will live. He has power to know what we think and what we say in secret. He has power to set up nations and tear them down. He has power to soften the hardest heart from the inside out make it a worshipful heart. He has power to simply touch someone and they were healed. He has power to calm a raging storm. He has power to raise the dead. He has power to give eternal life. He has power to do whatever he pleases. When we have that kind of awe of his power over all things, we agree he has power over our life!

To fear God means we have a reverence and awe of his Word. Right fear of him is learned through his Word. Listen to Deuteronomy

4:10, *"Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when he said to me, 'Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children.'"*

He means what he says in his Word. Our challenge is less about understanding his Word and more about revering and obeying it. Some verses don't need someone's "take" nor a study in the original Greek. Jesus said love your enemies. Do you know what that means? It means, love your enemies. Listen to this powerful verse from the prophet Isaiah 66:2b, *"These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word."*

To fear God means to tremble at his Word. Fearing God is like the ocean. I love the ocean. I love to fish, play, and be by the ocean. But, I also have a healthy fear of the ocean. I know it can wipe me out if I'm not careful. I know if I don't respect and honor the ocean, bad things can happen to me. Do you have a healthy fear of the ocean? Of God?

James Dobson writes, "If I could write a prescription for the women of the world, I would provide each one of them with a healthy dose of self-esteem and personal worth (taken three times a day until the symptoms disappear). I have no doubt that this is their greatest need. If women felt genuinely respected in their role as wives and mothers, they would not need to abandon it for something better. If they felt equal with men in personal worth, they would not need to be equivalent to men in responsibility. If they could only bask in the dignity and status granted them by the Creator, then their femininity would be valued as their greatest asset rather than scorned as an old garment to be discarded. Without question, the future of a nation depends on how it sees its women, and I hope we will teach our little girls to be glad they were chosen by God for the special pleasures of womanhood."

A godly woman understands she's created in the image of God and fears the Lord. And men, that's the big idea for you too. That's the message I want to leave with us all this Mother's Day.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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