

Ten Myths Moms Believe &
Why We All Need to Knock It Off

HOODWINKED



KAREN EHMAN & RUTH SCHWENK

FOREWORD BY CANDACE CAMERON BURE

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Hoodwinked

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ehman, Karen, 1964-

Hoodwinked : ten myths moms believe (and why we all need to knock it off) / by
Karen Ehman and Ruth Schwenk. – 1 [edition].

pages cm

ISBN 978-0-310-34343-1 (softcover)

1. Motherhood – Religious aspects – Christianity. I. Title.

BV4529.18.E365 2015

248.8431 – dc23

2015015792

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Published in association with the literary agency of Fedd & Company, Inc., Post Office Box 341973, Austin, TX 78734.

Cover design: *Dual Identity*

Cover illustrations: © *bortonia*/© *Zuki/iStockphoto*®

Interior design: *Denise Froehlich*

Interior illustration: © *Kogytuk/www.istock.com* / © *ba888/www.istock.com*

First printing August 2015 / Printed in the United States of America

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Foreword

As my husband Val and I have raised our growing children, motherhood has changed, each phase bringing its own distinct mix of joys and challenges. And, with every stage, I have been tempted to believe some statements about mothering that just aren't true.

When our kids were born, Val and I decided that I would be home with them full-time. My days were spent with my babies and children—feeding them, teaching them (whether it was their ABCs, how to tie their shoes, or how not to fight with their siblings), and caring for their most basic needs.

Because I was not actively pursuing my acting career during this season, I was tempted to believe that I was “just a mom.” Fans unknowingly solidified my feelings when they would request an autograph and then ask what new TV show I was working on. When I'd answer that I was staying home to raise my children, many times their expressions were either sour or disappointed. “Oh, so you're just a mom now?” they'd ask, as if the celebrity they just met suddenly became boring and worthless. My heart would sink, making me feel as if caring for my children didn't amount to anything. But that was a lie! Our society has perpetuated the myth that a mom at home is a second-string player. But the truth is a mother who spends her days with her children, nurturing and caring for them, is fulfilling a very important role in society. She is focusing on shaping her children for the future. What a crucial calling!

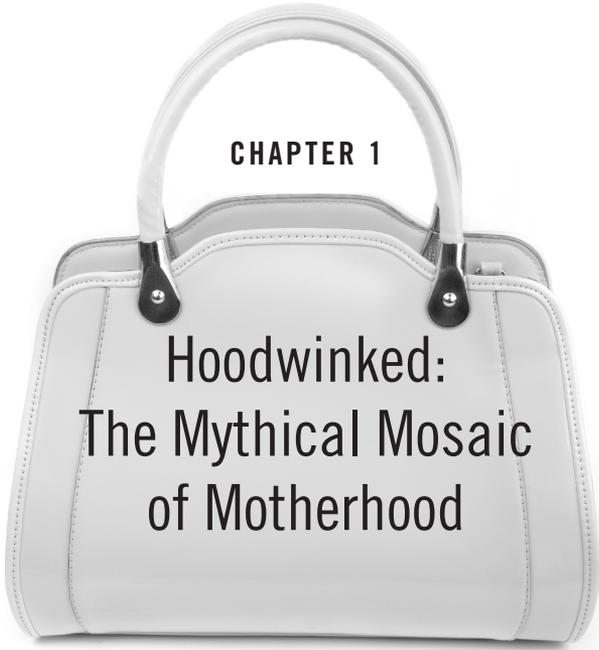
Later on, as my kids grew older and Val retired from his career as a professional hockey player, we prayerfully decided I would return to my career. With my kids all in middle or high school, and my husband at home full time, it gave me the flexibility to travel for work—whether going away for a short stint to film a movie or to cohost a talk show—as well as work “9 to 5” in our hometown at Warner Bros. Studios. A new season allowed for changes and growth within our family.

One of the many myths we moms believe is that we can have it all, all at once. But I have learned from experience that we really can't! As I wrote in my book *Balancing It All*, we can pursue our dreams and further our careers—if we'd like—but we have to learn to strike a balance which is, in essence, a juggling act. Sometimes we need to allow some spinning plates to drop. We must adjust our schedules to fit the needs of our families within each season of life. Sometimes we will need to pull back. Other times we can press forward. We can “have it all”—just not all at the same time!

When we buy into the myths of motherhood, we find ourselves distracted from our mission as moms. And we are tempted to compare ourselves to other mothers who seem to be “doing it right.” If only we could learn to stop believing these lies and start living the truth! Then, not only would we be able to embrace our unique journey of motherhood, but we'd be free to really enjoy our children as well. And we might learn to support other mothers who parent a bit differently than us rather than compete with them or write them off as a friend forever.

My prayer for you, as you read this book, is that you will stop believing the lies and start living the truth—the truth about motherhood that is found in God's Word. So don't be hoodwinked, mom! You are unique and so is your motherhood journey. May you be encouraged and empowered to be the mom God created—a woman who loves and serves him faithfully as she nurtures and guides her children.

—CANDACE CAMERON BURE, wife, mom of three, actress, producer, *New York Times* bestselling author, *Dancing with the Stars* season 18 finalist



CHAPTER 1

Hoodwinked:
The Mythical Mosaic
of Motherhood

Mother [Muh *ther*] —noun. A woman who does the work of twenty for free. See also saint.

As a mother, it is my job to take care of the possible and trust God with the impossible.

—RUTH BELL GRAHAM



Creeeeeak. Thunk. Creeeeeak. Thunk.

So went the old wooden teeter-totter in the neighborhood park at the dead end of our small-town street. The light green paint was peeling and the metal mechanisms were in dire need of a good oiling, but the children didn't care. They happily passed the time. Up. Down. Up. Down.

Creeeeeak. Thunk. Creeeeeak. Thunk.

A few friends and I (Karen) had gathered for an afternoon play date. It was a blustery fall day, the vibrantly colored leaves hanging on for

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dear life before being blown away into the crisp autumn air. As the children played on the swing set and merry-go-rounds and such, we moms chatted.

My first child had been born late in the spring. Now she sat bundled up tightly in the stroller, catching an afternoon catnap. The other mothers also had infants, but older children as well. And a few of the ladies were now approaching being the mom of a half-dozen kids.

Our conversations were all over the map. Sleep schedules. The best brand of diapers. What to do for an ear infection. (Call the doctor? Or squirt garlic oil in their ear?) And some with older children discussed what to do when your youngster has a squabble with another child at church or school. And of course we talked marriage—how to find time to make that a priority when it seemed like every ounce of physical and emotional energy was being drained from us constantly throughout the day just being a mom.

I sat there soaking it all in. As a new mom, I wanted so desperately to get this mothering thing right. And I not only wanted to get it right, I was pretty sure I already knew how to do it right. After all, I'm pretty observant. And can be quite opinionated. When I combined my observations with what I thought was the right opinion, I was pretty sure that if I just *did* all the right things on the front end, my kids would turn out wonderfully. And I was somewhat judgmental of those moms I encountered whose kids did not seem to be "turning out right."

It didn't matter that I was only about four months into my mothering gig, I was pretty confident. Well, at least outwardly. To be totally honest, at times my mind secretly migrated to a place of fear. *Am I doing this mothering thing right? Will my kids turn out okay? And am I making the right choices about how I am mothering them? And what I am feeding them? And how I am disciplining them?* But rarely did I let my guard down, exposing my insecurities or admitting my doubts. Nope. On the outside, I was calm, cool, collected, and confident. But inside my mind I had to give myself an occasional little pep talk to remind myself that I knew what I was doing.

I had a lot of other beliefs about mothering in general. Some beliefs I gathered by observation. Some were wishful thinking. Some beliefs other moms told me were true. Some I read on the pages of a popular parenting book. These beliefs Velcroed themselves to my impressionable mama mind and affected not only my perspective on mothering but also my behavior. But most of all . . . guess what I discovered about these beliefs?

All of them were dead wrong.

The Myths of Motherhood

These beliefs are the myths of motherhood that mess with us. That trip us up. That keep us feeling deflated and defeated. That prevent us from forging deep and meaningful relationships with other moms because we feel we have not measured up. That taunt us with wrong thinking about ourselves and about other moms. Or that put a pinch in our hearts toward our children and their behavior.

These are the myths of motherhood we will explore and dismantle together:

- ✿ Mothering Is Natural, Easy, and Instinctive
- ✿ The Way I Mother Is the Right (and Only) Way
- ✿ I Am “Just” a Mom
- ✿ Motherhood Is All-Consuming and All-Fulfilling
- ✿ A Good Mother Can Do It All, All at Once
- ✿ Motherhood Is a Rat Race
- ✿ Motherhood Is the Luck of the Draw
- ✿ Everything Depends on Me
- ✿ I Have to Do It All Right, or My Child Will Turn Out Wrong
- ✿ My Child’s Bad Choice Means I’m a Bad Mom

I don’t doubt that you could come up with some myths of your own, even beyond this list, because motherhood is not a playground. Oh sure, there are aspects of motherhood that are a downright delight, pieces of the motherhood puzzle that snap easily into place and make us smile. It is a deep, deep joy to be a mom. Our children often

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make us proud. But not all things motherly are packed with pleasure, causing us to sport a smile. A bigger-than-bite-sized chunk of our motherhood role is downright wearisome. Even worrisome. And our heart's layers can start peeling away, exposing our woe as we ride the teeter-totter of parenting. Up and down. Up and down.

Creeeeek. Thunk. Creeeeek. Thunk.

That is often the sound of a mom's heart as it bumps and bangs through life. And only Jesus can smooth out the ride as he allows us to gain his perspective, replacing the myths with the truth of his Word.

You Are Not Alone

Moms all over the world share this common thread of weary wondering. One minute we have it all figured out, and the next minute it all unravels. We asked over three hundred moms if they had preconceived notions of what motherhood would be like, and an astounding 83 percent answered, "Yes, absolutely!" Every single one of those moms commented that those preconceived notions were *dead wrong*. Whether it was through their judgment of other moms before they became a mom themselves, or just an ideal world of motherhood they created in their mind, there was a common thread among our sisters in the survey; a resounding chorus of feelings of loneliness, weariness, and disillusionment was expressed by these women. At the core was this, though: motherhood just isn't what they had expected, and they feel totally caught off guard and unprepared for this reality.

Sarah C. shared simply what many moms feel. "I'm not the mom I imagined I'd be. It's so hard to carry out all the ideas I had in my head. Motherhood is so much harder than I ever dreamed."

Sarah is certainly not alone. We read this same sentiment over and over again.

Cindy B. said,

Naturally, I was going to be just like my mom. . . . In the sixties, my father traveled six days a week leaving my mom to raise me,

four years old, and my twin brothers, one year old. After having three children, she was skinny, gorgeous, and perfect. She was always put together with hair and makeup and a cute outfit that fell perfectly on her perfect body. Every photo of her looked like a Barbie doll, including our home, which was perfect and immaculate 24/7. To this day, I'm honestly not sure how she did it. It wasn't a phase. She is still that way in her seventies. Fast-forward twenty-five years . . . I couldn't understand with just one baby at the time, what I was doing wrong. Why was I so exhausted all the time? Why would I cry at the drop of a hat? I was born to be a mom, right? Ask me as a child what I wanted to be when I grew up and I'd tell you "a mommy" without hesitation. Apparently, I was doing this mommy thing wrong. On a good day, my hair was brushed, and on a really good day, possibly my teeth! A five-minute shower was a luxury (unfortunately for my husband, it wasn't a daily luxury), but actually blow-drying my hair was not. I was supposed to fit back into my skinny jeans, like my mom, but shockingly I was still wearing my maternity sweat pants and looking six months pregnant! Sleep eluded me as did an explanation as to why I had achieved my dream of motherhood and was so clearly doing a terrible job. I questioned every choice I made because I certainly didn't know myself at all! This poor, innocent little baby girl was given a raw deal by getting me for a mother. What would become of her and how was I going to get my act together and become a REAL mother, you know, like Laura Petrie, Carol Brady, and Ma on *Little House on the Prairie*?

So how do we approach motherhood with a "right" view? How do we throw off the myths that have us all horribly hoodwinked?

Making a Mom Mosaic

It was a crisp and clear fall afternoon with ocean-blue skies and white puffy clouds that looked like spun cotton dancing in the air. My (Karen's) three young children, all elementary age, didn't put up the normal fuss getting their clothes on and their shoes tied that morning. The reason for their cooperation? It was homeschool field trip day.

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Several families were going on an outing to an art exhibit an hour away from home. Field trips meant fun—hanging out with friends and learning something new. And my kids loved packing a lunch to eat with the other students when the educational part of the day was all done.

As I strolled through the art gallery that morning I saw many amazing creations. There were vibrant oil paintings on canvas. Pottery pieces crafted from common red clay. Hand-blown, shiny glass objects. Collages crafted from items found in nature, such as wood and stone and shells. But the one that most caught my eye was a breathtaking mosaic that took up an enormous spot on the museum wall.

A mosaic piece of art is a very clever creation. Hundreds of seemingly broken pieces of colored glass, stone, or other materials are purposefully put together on a flat surface, creating a collage of color. While each individual piece isn't anything spectacular on its own, when they are strategically arranged, they combine to make a simply stunning image.

If you step back and view a mosaic piece in its entirety, a picture emerges. Perhaps it is a scene from nature such as a landscape of snow-capped mountains or a deep blue ocean with colorful fish swimming about. Maybe it is a snapshot of a skyline of towering or historic buildings. But more often than not, a mosaic is crafted to depict a person or persons.

Many of us have formed a mosaic in our minds of the perfect mom. Throughout our years growing up and into adulthood, we have collected tiny pieces of colored glass that we have mentally arranged in our mind to form a snapshot of just what we think a good mother should be. When we step back and gaze at the image we have fashioned, it too can take our breath away. And by that I mean leave us huffing and puffing for air as we race to try to replicate the image in our own lives.

Was there a mom in your childhood neighborhood who always fed the kids on your block fresh-baked cookies and glasses of lemonade?

Clink.

You deposited in your mind's bank that a good mom does that effortlessly and cheerfully.

Did one of your friends in high school have a mom who not only made it to all of her children's sporting events to cheer wildly in the stands, but she also held down an important job in the corporate world?

Clunk.

Another characteristic deposited. Of course you got the strong impression that a good mom should both bring home the bacon *and* fry it up in a pan.

You picked up another piece of colored glass for the mosaic of your mind when you, as a new mom, were having trouble keeping your toddler quiet in church, but a few rows ahead of you sat a mom of a half-dozen children who never moved a muscle throughout the entire service. This made you think that a good mom must know how to keep her children quiet when the preacher is preaching.

Did you visit the home of a new friend who has children about the same age as yours? Her home was not only tastefully decorated but also void of dust and clutter-free. Your mind migrated back to the scene you left at your house that morning: breakfast dishes still on the table, peanut butter smeared on the counter, and a trail of crumbs on the floor that would make Hansel and Gretel squeal with glee. Piles of dirty laundry. Dust bunnies. Toothpaste in the sink. And toys strewn about far from their proper home in the big plastic toybox.

Piece by piece we have crafted in our imagination a stunning mosaic of just what a mom should be. But there is one teensy-weensy fact we forget about mosaic depictions of people.

They are not real.

And though a real mosaic may be lovely to look at during a leisurely stroll through a cultured art gallery, a fictitious mosaic of motherhood

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is a horrifying sight for a mom who is trying her best to do this mothering thing.

But it isn't just our "real life" encounters with other seemingly capable and competent women that tempt us to craft an unrealistic image in our minds. A brief walk through recent history illustrates the mixed messages mothers have been fed. Images of the perfect stay-at-home mom, the liberated and freethinking woman, and the career mom. There have been a lot of moms to choose from—and to be thoroughly confused by!

Perhaps you remember *Leave It to Beaver*? The late 1950s and early '60s gave rise to a sitcom featuring "The Beaver," a likeable elementary-aged boy who was always finding his way in and out of trouble or adventure. His mom? June Cleaver was the ultimate picture of a woman in the '50s and early '60s. She was the ideal homemaker—always proper, ever wise, and consistently reliable. She was the picture of what a mom should be. In many ways, she was a motherhood mosaic come to life on the television screen!

The late 1960s and '70s saw tremendous change in society. Previously held views on sexuality, behavior, and gender roles were undergoing a "revolution." June Cleaver seemed like a woman and mom from the dusty and distant pages of history. For so many years, women had been wrongfully denied certain rights and opportunities. Seeking equality and fair treatment, the woman of this era was freethinking, liberated, and progressive. The sitcom *Partridge Family* showcases this shift. A widowed mother, Shirley, not only raised her five kiddos alone but also worked as the leader of a musical group comprised of the clan. They traveled around in a bohemian bus performing for crowds of screaming teens. Along with managing her career, she had to deal with the ups and downs of raising a brood of kids with their own challenges and antics. Shirley seemed to do it with ease.

And then came the 1980s and '90s. The popular *Cosby Show* portrayed both the husband and the wife as financial providers. No longer was just the husband working outside the home; in many cases, the mom

was as well. The message during this period was of a competent and capable career woman (hello, unflappable Clair Huxtable!), who still easily managed the majority of parental responsibilities. What was implied was that you can and should have it all!

Then there were the anti-heroines, the “realistic” moms created out of a backlash against all these perfect women. Just look at *Roseanne* and Debra Barone in *Everybody Loves Raymond*. Instead of plying their families with delicious home-cooked dinners, they burn their casseroles and unleash torrents of sarcasm and anger on their unwitting husbands.

Then in the 2000s, with the Internet and the advent of social media such as Facebook, the amazingly organized mom, the creative mom, the oh-so-spiritual mom, and the every-other-kind-of mom imaginable migrated online and developed ten thousand faces. Not only your best friend, but also the friend back from high school and the woman you met at Bible study and the blogger you follow online are now all pushing their seemingly perfect images of motherhood at you ten times a day (or as often as you check Facebook, peruse the pins on Pinterest, or spy a snapshot on Instagram).

Where do all these images of motherhood leave us? How could women today not be a little confused on what we should do or be? The debate on womanhood and motherhood is still being waged. Just those brief and general strokes of history help us to see why understanding who we are as moms has been so difficult. The messages in our culture have not only been conflicting, they have been confusing. So if you are feeling a bit perplexed, there is good reason to be! We have formed a conflicting image in our mind from the people we’ve known — or the ones we spied on television or the Internet — of just how a good mom behaves.

Scriptural Standards for What Makes a Good Mom

Now let’s not be so quick to just blame society at large or the Internet or television in particular for causing us to concoct an image of perfection in our minds. Sometimes our wrong line of thinking can

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be traced directly back to the lofty standard of one of the most famous females in Scripture: the woman we encounter in Proverbs 31.

Of course all Scripture is God breathed. It is useful for teaching us and training us and helping us correct our behavior (2 Timothy 3:16). It enables us to pursue godliness and to stay away from evil. Scripture is perfect. But imperfect people can put a certain—and incorrect—spin on the Scriptures. Sometimes we do it to make a point we are so desperately trying to exert. Other times we are just repeating what we have been taught in the past about a particular portion of the Bible. And sometimes the voices of past preachers and teachers echo in the chambers of our mind, and we just cannot see a passage any other way than the way we have been taught.

And the mother of all passages? (Pun *totally* intended.) It is the woman we meet in Proverbs 31.

She is iconic, making an entrance almost every Mother's Day at church or occasionally on a popular Christian-mommy blog of today. She is placed on a pedestal. Praised for all she did. We glance over those twenty-two verses in the Old Testament and wonder if the woman ever slept. (And we don't see her sipping coffee, but no way could she get through that to-do list without a little java in a jar!)

Let's pause and read about her here in the verses listed below. See if it doesn't make you just a tad bit tired noting all she seems to accomplish from dawn until dusk.

- 10 *An excellent wife who can find?
 She is far more precious than jewels.*
- 11 *The heart of her husband trusts in her,
 and he will have no lack of gain.*
- 12 *She does him good, and not harm,
 all the days of her life.*
- 13 *She seeks wool and flax,
 and works with willing hands.*
- 14 *She is like the ships of the merchant;
 she brings her food from afar.*

Hoodwinked: The Mythical Mosaic of Motherhood

- 15 *She rises while it is yet night
and provides food for her household
and portions for her maidens.*
- 16 *She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.*
- 17 *She dresses herself with strength
and makes her arms strong.*
- 18 *She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.*
- 19 *She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.*
- 20 *She opens her hand to the poor
and reaches out her hands to the needy.*
- 21 *She is not afraid of snow for her household,
for all her household are clothed in scarlet.*
- 22 *She makes bed coverings for herself;
her clothing is fine linen and purple.*
- 23 *Her husband is known in the gates
when he sits among the elders of the land.*
- 24 *She makes linen garments and sells them;
she delivers sashes to the merchant.*
- 25 *Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.*
- 26 *She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.*
- 27 *She looks well to the ways of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.*
- 28 *Her children rise up and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:*
- 29 *“Many women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all.”*
- 30 *Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*
- 31 *Give her of the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the gates. (ESV)*

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Okay. Let's break this down. This gal was seemingly incredible.

As a wife, she had her husband's trust, doing him "good, and not harm, all the days of his life." Did you catch that? *All* the days of his life (verses 11–12).

She certainly was a Becky home-ecky, what with all of this talk of wool and flax and spinning and making homemade ruby-red garments for her family to wear in the wintertime. She even whipped up a bedspread and yet still had time to make herself some pretty purple clothing (verses 13, 19, 21, 22).

She got up early yet stayed up late (verses 15 and 18).

She was a savvy shopper. She bought food (verse 14) and a field (verse 16). And she didn't just zip down to the corner grocery store for her food. She made an effort to go all the way across town to bring her food "from afar." And that field? It seems as if she used it to turn a profit, perhaps by selling the fruit from the vineyard she planted on it.

She even had time for charity work (verse 20). Yet she still had time to stop by the local gym on her way home to work on sculpting her arms (verse 17).

Okay. Maybe that's a stretch.

While we aren't told her particular method of mothering or what Christian self-help books she read to get her colicky baby to sleep through the night, or her strong-willed child to obey the first time, or her teen to do his chores without being asked, we are certain that she struck the parenting jackpot of wisdom. How else would your children rise up and call you blessed (verse 28)? She must have not made a single mistake in the rearing of her brood.

Of course, the Mister also had great things to say about his spouse. He praised her. Shoot. The leaders of the town even seemed to rave about her (verses 23, 31).

She wasn't lazy (verse 27). She wasn't a mom who screamed at her kids but talked to them patiently and lovingly (verse 26).

If there ever were such a thing as Wonder Woman, this gal surely was it.

Or was she?

Wonder Woman or Hoodwinked Heroine?

When reading Scripture, it is important to keep in mind not only the content but also the context. We also have to be careful not to read certain descriptions of what a person did through our modern eyes and with only our current culture in mind. We have to climb into a time capsule and venture back into history to unearth the true picture of why someone did what we read about them doing.

When we catch a glimpse of all that the woman in Proverbs 31 did to serve and provide for her family, it can seem exhausting. She made things by hand. She was responsible for food and clothing and yet still had time to have a ministry outside of her four walls. But just because this particular woman crafted clothing and bedspreads for her family, does it mean that we have to?

Perhaps in the time in which she lived and the income bracket into which she and her husband fell, she had no other choice than to sew her own clothing and make her own comforter. Do we need to look at what she did and then mimic her? Or what if she were from a wealthy family, as has been noted by biblical scholars, since in verse 15 we discover she had domestic help? Maybe she had free time on her hands and sewing was her hobby. Maybe that's it! She perused the Pinterest boards of her day each afternoon and then stitched and sewed to pass the time.

Should we select these verses that mention this mom sewing and deduce that we too must sew clothing for our family and coverings for our bed? Or is the bigger takeaway the fact that she spent her time making sure that her house was properly outfitted and her kids had adequate clothing to wear?

It is also helpful for us to know that the verses in this chapter that speak of this wife and mother were written in the form of an

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acrostic poem. My high school pastor first pointed this out to me when I was a teenager, and I found it fascinating.

The word *acrostic* can be defined as a poem, word puzzle, or other composition in which certain letters in each line form a word or words. In the case of the description found in Proverbs 31:10–31, each line starts with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Some scholars think this was done in order to easily commit to memory the words of this poem of praise. That way it could be easily recited aloud. In fact, the Jewish tradition is that men recite this acrostic as a way to praise the women in their life—often a husband to his wife—and usually on Friday nights before the Shabbat dinner.

There might be another interesting way for us to evaluate this passage other than as a check-off list of all of the actions that any of us who want to be a good wife and mother must accomplish in each twenty-four-hour period. Perhaps in reality this was an offering of praise about one particular woman from one particular man. Most Jewish and Christian scholars agree that the person who wrote Proverbs 31 was none other than King Solomon. At the beginning of the chapter, he is identified as King Lemuel. King Solomon was also known by that name. They were the same person. And just who was the amazing mother he was writing about?

Solomon's mother was Bathsheba. Yes. The same Bathsheba, if you are not familiar with the story, who was spied bathing one day by King David as he was up on his roof. The king decided he simply must have this woman—this (ahem!) *married* woman—as his wife! She then got herself in a tangled-up mess of adultery and murder and all sorts of scandal. Yet this could be the very woman the writer of Proverbs 31 is praising.

How in the world can that be?

Think about writing a card for someone's birthday. Maybe we wouldn't be so clever as to be able to offer an acrostic poem. Maybe we simply would jot our thoughts down on a piece of paper, or tell them on their Facebook wall all the things we love about them.

Would we include the ugly parts of their life? Their mistakes? The times they screwed up? Of course not. We would pick out the very best characteristics about this person. The things that stood out to us that they did over the course of the time we have known them. Actions that were memorable. And honorable. And noble.

At the end of our poem of praise for this person, if we read it in its entirety, it might appear that our birthday friend did all of these wonderful things all in the same day. But of course she didn't. It was a snapshot of her life. The highlights. The parts you would like to mention on a Facebook post or include in your handwritten birthday card.

Only the good stuff.

That is much the way we should view Proverbs chapter 31. We don't get to see between the lines.

If we read that she does her husband good and not harm all the days of her life, it might seem like a standard to which we can never live up. But we have to also think of what each verse *doesn't* say. That verse doesn't say that she does her husband good and not harm all the days of his life *every single moment of every single day*. Of course she must have had times when she blew it. When she lost her temper or was short on patience. If she never did, well . . . then she would be perfect. And we know the only perfect person who ever walked the face of the earth was Jesus himself.

Let's stop using the image of perfection that has been perpetuated for decades, perhaps even centuries, about this wife and mother. Was she a fabulous mom? It seems so. But what she wasn't—was perfect. She still had bad moments. She still had flaws. She still had areas of weakness in her personality and perhaps even physically. (We think she even struggled with cellulite on her thighs, since only her strong arms are mentioned!)

Perfection or Perfected?

We moms are never going to get everything perfect. Not our homes. Not our method of discipline. Not our food. Not our schedule.

HOODWINKED

When we keep these mythical mosaics of perfection as our goal, we only set ourselves up for sure failure. We need to stop pursuing the appearance of perfection. (Yes, the *appearance* of perfection. There is no such thing as actual perfection.) We must start instead to pursue the person Jesus Christ.

Only Jesus can help us to shake off the lies and embrace the truth. Only a relationship with him can help us to truly be a better mom. He doesn't do this by allowing us to be perfect, but rather by enabling us to be perfected.

Being perfected means that we pursue being more like Christ. We let the Word of God dwell richly within our heart and then we seek to obey what it says. We learn from the examples of women in Scripture, both the good and the bad, and allow the hard lessons they learned to serve as a warning for us today. We let go of the race to replicate someone else's mothering experience and instead fasten our seatbelts and prepare ourselves for the unique ride that Jesus will take us on in this whole mothering experience.

Through each joy. Each trial. Every proud mothering moment and every discouraging disappointment. We seek to learn the lesson Christ has for us at each juncture. We get our eyes off of other mothers—whether from our past or present, in real life or on some sort of screen—and we fix our eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

But most importantly, we stop believing the lies. Oh, there are many! And all of these lies only serve to get us off track in our pursuit of godliness and graciousness. We need to stop latching onto the lies and start living in the truth. But sometimes the problem is that we are believing—and in essence living—a lie or two, and we don't even know it. So our first step in breaking this awful cycle—of pursuing perfection based on a bunch of myths, and then failing miserably, only to beat ourselves up, cry a little (or a lot), and then get up and try to chase perfection again—is to know the lies we are consciously or unconsciously believing.

Yes. Expose them. Destroy them. Replace them with the truth.

Are you ready to start making sense of the myths you have believed? As with all lies, there is always an element of truth. So we must be discerning. The Devil is tricky. These myths we believe are subtle twistings of the truth. Theologian Charles Spurgeon said it best: “Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right.” Some of these myths seem almost right, but they are still dead-center wrong. And they can mess with our mothering in the most awful of ways.

So are you ready to begin uncovering the truth buried deep in some of those messages that are really myths?

Today can be your first day, your first step toward walking in greater clarity. The journey begins now. It’s not too late, no matter where you are, to begin walking in the light of God’s Word. Motherhood doesn’t have to leave us stumbling in the dark. We have a Leader who will show us the way.

No more myths. No more mixed messages. No more conflicting images and ideals of what a woman and mom should look like.

Are you tired of being hoodwinked? Today is the day we can all begin to “knock it off!” Join us as we discover the ten myths that have left us hoodwinked, so we can stop believing the lies and start living the truth.