



# What's In Your Hand? [Serving] Proverbs 31:1-9

## What happens when God opens our hands?

*She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. Proverbs 31:20*

## Insight from Mama Lemuel

### [A] The King's Character [Resist the Traps]

**Focus: Who you should be [31:3-5]**

- [1] Resist the Trap of Immorality [3-4a]
- [2] Handle Alcohol Responsibly [4b-5]

### [B] The King's Calling [Open Your Hands]

**Focus: What You Should Do - Serve [31:6-9]**

... learn to do good; seek justice [mishpat], correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. **Isaiah 1:17**

- [1] Speak Up for Those Who Are Suffering [6-7]
- [2] Speak Up for Those Who Can't [8a]
- [3] Speak Up for the Dying - Dignity [8b]
- [4] Speak up for the Poor and Needy [9]

### [C] 6 Ways to Serve Others

- [1] Listen and Validate
- [2] Provide Practical Assistance
- [3] Pray with Those in Need
- [4] Use Relevant Scripture to Encourage
- [5] Be Present and Compassionate
- [6] Engage in Acts of Service

## Study Questions/Prayer

- [1] Read Proverbs 31:2-5. Can you remember a moment when your mom or dad was exasperated with you and took some time to lovingly share some wisdom with you about life? What was the topic? How did you feel about when they were sharing their wisdom with you?
- [2] Read the list of 6 Ways to Serve Others. Did you think of someone who needed your encouragement when you read the list? If so, make a plan to serve that person this week in a way that is found on the list or in another way God leads you.
- [3] Pray for God to deepen your desire to serve others around you and give you strength to speak up for those in need.

### I. The Source [Proverbs 31:1]

The words of King Lemuel. [Belonging to God]

An oracle that his mother taught him [2 Timothy 1:5]

### II. The Exasperation of Mama Lemuel [Proverbs 31:2]

<sup>2</sup> What are you doing, my son? What are you doing, son of my womb? [Isaiah 49:15a] What are you doing, son of my vows? [1 Samuel 1:10-11, 26-27]

**1 Samuel 1:10-11** She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. <sup>11</sup> And she vowed a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."

### III. Who You Should Be [Proverbs 31:3-5]

<sup>3</sup> Do not give your strength to women, your ways to those who destroy kings. [Proverbs 5:7-14] [muddies vision and has no reward, only leads to destruction] <sup>4a</sup> It is not for kings, . . . [Deuteronomy 17:14-20; 1 Kings 11:1; Nehemiah 13:26]

<sup>4b</sup> O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink, [Ecclesiastes 10:16-17, Isaiah 5:11; Proverbs 20:1] <sup>5</sup> lest they drink and forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted. [Isaiah 5:22-23]

### B. What You Should Do - Serve [Proverbs 31:6-9]

<sup>6</sup> Give strong drink to the one who is perishing [point of collapse] and wine to those in bitter distress; [because of pain] <sup>7</sup> let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more.

These two verses contain a common cynical saying in this time in history that provided insight how to treat the poor and the suffering. . . . In this text the statements are sarcastic. They provide a sarcastic warning to King Lemuel of exactly what not to do about the poor. Providing intoxicants to dull their senses instead of addressing the real causes of their distress and misery is not the expected behavior of a king.

<sup>8</sup> Open your mouth for the mute, [illem - speechless, silent] for the rights of all who are destitute. [H: chaloph - transformation; passing away or vanishing]

<sup>9</sup> Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.