

# Every Perfect Gift



## September 19: The Gift of Praise

It wasn't the stereotypical relationship between a daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. When we met, I was 17. Today she is 100. "She is far more precious than jewels," although she wouldn't say so.

She not only taught Sunday School, she created a girls club to develop relationships when their peers were competing. She sewed outfits for them, "working with willing hands," and created musical programs to present to the congregation to develop their self-confidence.

I can't count how many nieces, nephews, family friends and unknown others she housed. Not just housed but mothered during their time of isolation. Talk about "opening her hand to the poor and reaching out to the needy."

She was a gymnast at the famous Venice Beach in Southern California where she "girded herself with strength and made her arms strong." Her husband was a state legislator, "known in the city gates," and had "a seat among the elders" in their church.

Ironically, she was ultimately abandoned by the very people who saw her righteousness "up close and personal." Her children did not "rise up and call her happy," and her husband did not "praise her."

Sadly, not all righteous women are as revered as the woman of Proverbs 31.

"Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates."

My former mother-in-law, who I believe will ultimately be among the first, in life was the servant of all. Are we striving to be the greatest, or are we content, as Jesus told his disciples in Mark 9, 'to be first by being last of all and servant of all'?

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### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

**Who has inspired you to serve others? Tell the story of someone in your life who mentored or taught you to serve the world.**

**What are the characteristics of servant leadership? Why is this model different from other forms of leadership with which we might be familiar?**

