

May 11, 2014
Mother's Day
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An Example of Motherhood

You know, the Ellis family has suffered a terrible loss. Zelda was the mother that God gave them. And she's gone. But being released from her aged, sick, weak body, she's with the Lord. We rejoice in that, because her mind is perfected now. And in the resurrection, she'll have a perfected body. All sickness is gone. All pain, all sorrow, all tears and anxiety, and all loneliness and dread and fear. It's all gone. She finally knows the full meaning of love. The perfect love of the Lord. The full meaning of peace and joy. Finally, she knows that in its fullness. You know, her mother's day is filled with unbroken, never-ending happiness. I thought it was so symbolic that that dear lady went home to be with the Lord on Resurrection Sunday morning, or day, Resurrection Day. What a perfect time for the family to remember their mother going home.

But the family can look back with love and great thankfulness for Zelda. And look forward with anticipation that they'll see her again, because that rests on God's faithfulness, his promises. They will see her again, if they know the Lord Jesus. I hope that you understand. I don't throw that open to everybody. It's for those that have received Christ as their Savior. Many of us have lost our mother, and some of us have no assurance whatsoever that we'll ever see them again. And that's heartbreaking. I know that personally.

What has God designed a mother to be? The time of conception may occur in a marriage that's committed to lifelong companionship, love, sacrifice, giving, and a lifelong time of joy. It may come about under those circumstances, or conception may occur for selfish, momentary, emotional, unfulfilling reasons. It can happen either way. But God has designed that a baby's development is going to be in the womb of the woman, and that it should stretch out over a period of nine months. He has reason for that time. Changes occur in the mother's body first, we're noticing, to ready her for the coming little one. And then as that happens, she grows in her awareness that inside of her, she's carrying a living person. A little one that is going to be completely dependent upon her. Certainly at this stage of development in the body, completely dependent upon her, providing all that it needs for its development and coming to birth. As much as others outside might want to have a part in that, other than some for medical reasons, the mother's body must provide everything that little one needs as it comes to birth.

She's forced to ask herself in that time if she'll give her all even after it's born. Will she give all of her life, if necessary, to meet the needs of that little one? Do you know that a half a million mothers in our country selfishly say no to that question of whether they'll give their all to sustain the life and help that little one develop? Every year, a half a million mothers in this country say no to that. And they destroy the life that they're carrying. And then they go on their hardened, self-absorbed way, thinking very little sometimes of the one that they have destroyed.

But the others, a vast majority of them, launch out into a lifelong role of mothering. First, there is that stage of complete dependence. Even after the birth, you know, even the necessary food for the first stages of development come right from the mother's body. God has it designed that way. That's not by choice, that's by design. That that mother be the one who is totally the supplier for that little one. That it's totally dependent upon her. She needs to see that, feel that, believe that, live it out, that total dependence. So, that first stage of life we call complete dependence.

It teaches a mother how dependent she is, really, to be able to provide all that that little one needs. It stresses her, pushes her to the limits that she might be able to supply fully, according to every need. She learns the need for consistency, for carefulness for that little one as she tends to the regimen of physical needs. And there's the ever-growing urge in every mother, the ever-growing urge to just take that little one and hold it close to herself. And in herself, to say, "I love you." And then to even verbalize it and show it with a tender kiss or caress. And to do that over and over and over again as that little one grows. It's her way of growing in that love for that little one as well, with those gentle words.

You know, every step that the little one takes in the progress of learning is wonderful to watch. And a joy to a mother, because she watches that one as it learns to move in the world. There are some mothers that keep diaries of every new change in the child's development. "Oh, he touched his nose today." "He rolled halfway over." "He actually held a toe today." On and on and on it goes, and they just delight in every little new development. It's the mother that helps the little one learn to eat a variety of food. Some mothers don't expand that spectrum of variety as they ought to. Sometimes children come to their later years and all they have is a little circle of things to eat.

I have met adults. Well, I'm going to tell a little bit on family matters here. But I had a brother-in-law who's now with the Lord. When he met Susan's sister and they fell in love, I remember somehow the discussion came up about his

eating habits. Somehow the statement came up that he liked certain kinds of meat. I can't remember right now whether it was that he loved green peas or hated green peas, but I remember green peas were part of it, and potatoes. And not much else. That was about the whole spectrum of what that man was interested in eating. And I thought, "If he's going to marry Susan's sister, that's going to have to change." That can't be. But I have to admit to you, though, that man was resistant.

So, you know, you want to take that into consideration when you consider marriage. You better check out whether this person's mother has introduced them to the great variety of what the Lord supplies on the earth. I know they don't have to eat strange and exotic things with six legs and crawlers and things like that. But just think of the richness of what God has given to us. I think each new experience is worth the thrill of enjoyment. I think especially when a child begins to speak with understanding, that's a thrilling time. It may be simple little sounds and gurgles and beginnings of words, but as they develop and you see that it comes with understanding and that their mind is clear and able to express themselves, what a joy. What a joy.

These all would draw a mother into the complexity of the interacting of, with the growing of the child and all that life brings to the child. Because a mother, you see, is exposed to all of that. She is involved in all of that development. She's involved with response to all that development. And she gets the joy of sharing in the progress. A mother sets an example for a child. She guides her child to imitate her, her choices, her values, her beliefs, her hopes, her dreams, and her plans. She wants the child to imitate that. In time, the child may divert from those guidelines, hopefully building on them and improving on them, but sometimes not.

But only if a mother has taken the Lord's counsel as her source of truth, as the foundation for everything she brings to this little one that she loves. Only if she has made the Lord her first love. It's easy to speak of these things, having been in the service for Zelda yesterday and hearing the testimony of her life. Only if the Lord has been her first love. Only if she made bringing her child to the day of that one's receiving the Lord Jesus as their Savior, only if she's made that her focus, her goal for her child, as her day of greatest rejoicing, can she feel fulfilled for that little one spiritually.

A couple of weeks ago we had the joy of sharing with Debbie and Ernie Uhart, as their little 10-year-old, I think, Joshua is about that anyway, that he received the Lord. There was no day of greater joy for Susan and I for Susan and me, rather. There was no greater joy for us in any of our children than the day

when they received Jesus as their Savior. To know that we've brought them to the Lord and now they could rest their life on Him. We can still be there as parents, but now they have the perfect one to rest on for counseling, guidance, and strength.

How does a mother get a child to that place? Well, I think by early and through the child's development, bringing the child to God's counsels and His Word on every issue in life, to teach the child that God speaks to every issue in life that's important for decision-making. Every heartache is addressed by the Word of God. Every disappointment, every decision that a child could make that's essential to life, God has counsel for it. And if a mother has taught her child that God's counsels are best, only then, when she sees her child completely dependent on the Lord Himself, only then can she draw back to the loving input that's going to be her delight to give, even though the child might become independent as an adult, to draw back to that level where she can give her loving input all the rest of their life and know they're secure, their foundation is set, their happiness is assured, their care, their guidance, it's sure because they're resting on the Lord Himself.

Principles from God's Word

From God's Word, I'm going to give you the order of importance that God puts on some very essential things. I'm going to take you to Deuteronomy chapter 6 for this, and show you from God's Word His order of importance. Okay, first, a first order of importance from Deuteronomy 6, you're going to find this, but this is in fact the section that the Lord Jesus quoted from when he was asked, "What is the first commandment and most important commandment?"¹ The Lord Jesus quoted from what we're going to read here, and this is what he quoted from. Deuteronomy 6, I'm going to read verses 4 and 5. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." This is what the Lord Jesus quoted from. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." God has said that's number one. That's of first importance in this life, for us and for our children. To love Him with all our heart, our soul, our strength. Number two, what does he say after that is secondarily important. Now, I know you can say, "Well, the Lord Jesus said, 'Well, the second commandment is like unto it, to love your neighbor as yourself,'"² and he goes to Leviticus for that, you know. In the order of the commandments, obviously, to

¹ Matt. 22:38; Deut 6:5; 10:12; 30:6 if you look up these references in footnote one and two, you will know these verses. You would have memorized the truth of it.

² Matt. 22:39 Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19:19; Mark 12:31; Lk. 10:27; (Romans 13:9; Gal. 5:14; Ja. 2:8)

love God is absolutely basic, and then secondarily, in that theme, if you want to follow that through, loving everybody else would be secondary. But look at the order here for life, for you as an individual. Love the Lord first.

Secondly, "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart." Number two, then, is to bring His Word into your heart. I want you to see this as God's order. I would preach it all the time and tell you how important it is for you to bring God's Word into your heart. Let His Word be the foundation for your thoughts, the foundation for your decisions, the foundation for how you think, but let Him say it. Love Him first with all that you are, and then bring His Word into your heart, not just your mind. Not just your mind. In your heart, it has to be something you delight in, you surrender to it, it becomes yours. When it comes into your heart, it's yours. It's not just God's Word, it's yours by choice. You love it.

Thirdly, He says here, "You shall teach them diligently to your children." Thirdly, then, fits here on Mother's Day, and as we look to Father's Day, to teach diligently God's Word to our children. That's number three. Love the Lord. Bring His Word into your heart. And then, in its first outward demonstration, outward expression, teach His Word to your children.

Number four. Right after that it says, "And shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, when you rise up." So number four is to talk of God's Word. To love God with all your heart. To bring His Word into your heart. To teach His Word to your children. And now He says, "Talk of My Word." Talk of it wherever you are. Fill your day and the places you are and what you do. When you're talking, talk of My Word. You might examine yourself this way. When I talk, how often do I bring God's Word to bear on what I'm saying? Do I do it from morning till noon till evening till night? Or is it just an occasional event? God says it should be all through the day. From the time you rise up to the time you go to bed. He says then, after mentioning that you should talk of His Word, I think this kind of builds on that, when He says, "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."

It's interesting to me when you study the Word of God that you see those people that go to the technicalities, and others that catch the spirit of what's meant and apply it to their life from the heart. They had the Pharisees that took this to mean that what you need to do is take little bits of Scripture, sometimes written on little leather rectangles or whatever, and make yourself a little bracelet, and hang this from that bracelet so it's right there on the back of your

hand. Oh yes, and then make yourself a nice leather band around your head, and hang some of this down right on your forehead. Now you have fulfilled it.

Can't you see that that's just an external, impersonal, legalistic, structural way of doing what God is saying? What is the hand for? It's for doing things in your daily life. It's your limb and your means from your body for touching and handling and doing things. In other words, with whatever you do, let the Word of God be there to influence it. Do it by counsel from the Word of God. What's this up here? It speaks of your thoughts. Whatever you do and whatever you think, let your thoughts be guided by the Word of God. Let what you do be guided by the Word of God. It's not fulfilled because you put some leather things on your hands or your forehead. It's fulfilled by letting what you do with your hands and what you do with your mind reflect on the Word of God and be guided by it. This is God's counsel. Guide you in all that you do, all that you think.

And then he says in verse 9, "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." That isn't fulfilled by taking some white paint and a brush and going out and painting stuff on the doorposts and the gate, you know. If in fact it isn't an expression of what you are and who you are, if you will, first of all, have it in your life, he's saying, make it known to the world around you. Let them know that God's Word is central to your life. You want to be identified by God's Word to the world around you.

Scripture is very clear about our responsibility for our children. You know, a child is supposed to be trained, raised, brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Proverbs 22 says at verse 6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Why does he not depart from it? Because in that process of growing up, he makes it his own. God's desire is that from infancy he might be exposed to the Word of God by example, by what he hears, by what he sees, and along the way he would make it his own, and we know that means that little one must come to Christ personally. He must personally receive him as a Savior, personally thank him for his Word and bring it into him as his own. He won't depart from it because he's made it his own. He's not dependent on his mother or his father any longer. That's what's behind that verse.

In fact, I found another verse back here in Proverbs 20 at verse 11, a very practical little comment. "Even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right." And all that's saying is you just have to watch the life and you can tell what's in the heart. And that's even evident in a child. It's wonderful to see children that show early a tender heart for the Lord. They don't have to be 20 or 30 or 40 in order to become a Christian. It's beautiful to see a

child receive him when they're young, and then to watch them express outwardly what their personal love for the Lord is, and how they make their decisions and why they do what they do because they want to please him. That's what the Scriptures say.

And then lastly, up in Ephesians 6, you know, you have these things about children and the role of parents with their children. Right at the beginning of chapter 6 in Ephesians at verse 1, I'd like to read with you. It says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise. That it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

Now when we think of mothers and fathers working with their children, helping them grow, this whole thing about obedience becomes an issue. And a parent wants obedience in their children. But God in his wisdom kind of puts this in a bracket. He puts a frame around this idea of obedience. Here it is in verse 4. "And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath." And that means don't push them to the place of such utter frustration that they just simply explode. "But bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." Wow, he must have been reading Proverbs. Because that's right out of the book of Proverbs of what we just read.

So the frame around this whole matter of bringing up children and expecting obedience is not to set our demands on them that come from us and from things that are really not for their good. Things that may serve our will and our desires but aren't really from God and aren't really right for them. Which only tend to frustrate them and bring their lives to dissipation. But rather bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Let his standards be the guidelines.

And then fathers, then mothers rejoice in obedience when it's in the Lord. In the Lord. And then what joy there is in saying, "I see the Lord in my child." "I see their love for him and I deliver them into his hands." "For his care." I think then a parent in their drawing back, even into old age, can have peace and assurance and joy. Their job is done. Not that it's really ever done until they die. They're there as that standard. That one to be honored. That one to be loved. For all that they've already put into that life according to the word of God.

Our mothers deserve our hearts' thankfulness to God for them. After all, remember this, God gave you your mother. He's the one that made the choice. And God doesn't do anything wrongly. You may have had other opinions along the way, but God made the right decision for you. Give him thanks for her.

Father, thank you for our mothers. How precious these are who have nurtured us through our growing up years. Brought us to adulthood and continue to love us even as we've struggled with life. Thank you for their wisdom. And most of all, I thank you for those that love you. That have instilled the word of God in the lives of their children. And that have turned them over to your counsel and to your strength. And to love you with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. Thank God for mothers. In Jesus' name, amen. - Okay, man.