

Mother's High Calling

Happy Mother's Day to all our mothers in the house today! I am so thankful for God's grace gift of a MOTHER in my life!! I don't know where I would be today if it were not for the love and support of my own mom and of my wife who has so beautifully invested into the lives of our children. What a blessing mothers are if for no other reason than they give us life! So may we honor our mothers today!!

Welcome to a new series we are starting today called FIGHTING FOR YOUR FAMILY. Over these next 6 weeks we hope to encourage you and help strengthen your family by taking a look at 6 areas where the FAMILY is under attack. So much of the dysfunction we see in our world today really is a byproduct of the deterioration of the family. Whether it is exhausted mothers overwhelmed by their enormous responsibilities, emotionally and spiritually challenged father's who have become distracted by life, or children growing up in a world without a vision for their lives, our families are really taking a beating and the waves of the culture are shipwrecking our homes. Today as we kick-off our series and in honor of Mother's Day we are going to look at A Mother's High Calling! I want to start by sharing with you a few quotes that I think really illustrate beautifully the incredible impact a mother has on our lives.

"Life doesn't come with a manual; it comes with a mother." —Unknown

"There is no role in life that is more essential than that of motherhood." —Elder M. Russell Ballard

"The hand that rocks the cradle rules the nation and its destiny." —South African Proverb

I don't care where you go in the world or in what time period within human history, the calling of MOTHERHOOD has not changed regarding its significance. The high calling of motherhood is not only important, it is ESSENTIAL to the well-being of human civilization! We need to be reminded of this because just in my brief lifetime on this earth I have seen motherhood come under attack. I have seen women who have wanted to stay at home and raise their children be labeled as lazy or as somehow less significant because they gave up a career in the workplace. I have seen the rise of birth control and even abortion cause us to think of children as a nuisance or a curse to a woman finding her true worth and significance in life. As if being a mother was somehow settling for something less important. Now let me just say this, if you are having to work for financial reasons (your a single mom, a particular family situation, etc.) and you can't stay home with your children or you want to work outside the home, I want you to know that there is nothing wrong with that, but don't let society or our materialistic culture prevent you from the most important responsibility of all, raising the next generation! Let me also say this. If you are someone who has the desire to have children and you have not been able to, my heart goes out to you and I have no idea the pain this has caused you. I pray for God's comfort and for God to do the miraculous in your life. But I want you to know that God can still use you to impact children's lives for the next generation whether that be in the church through various ministries, single moms going it alone that could use some help, orphans

abandoned by their parents for whatever reason, etc. I want to challenge you to prayerfully ask God how He may use you.

Motherhood is a high CALLING! Let me share with you three biblical reasons why.

1) Every child is an eternal being that will never die.

We see this with the declaration of Jesus being conceived in Mary's womb.

Luke 1:26-33 (NIV) **26** In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, **27** to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. **28** The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." **29** Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. **30** But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. **31** You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, **33** and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

Of course Jesus is different in that He has always existed and has no beginning. However, once human life is conceived it will live forever.

Ecclesiastes 12:6 Remember him—before the silver cord is severed, and the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the wheel broken at the well, (Here in verse 6 Solomon the writer is describing the death of a human being on earth. We are like clay pots/pitchers or bowls overlaid with gold. We are easily broken into pieces) **7 and the dust returns to the ground it came from,** (our physical bodies will perish and will eventually return to dust of which in the beginning our human bodies were made from) **and the spirit** (or soul that God gave us at conception) **returns to God who gave it.** (Our physical bodies are temporary housings for our soul which is eternal and ultimately our soul will return to the God who gave it to us)

The question is where will our soul spend eternity once we shed our physical bodies in death?

Revelation 20 gives us only two possible realities. But I want you to note that both realities are eternal destinations.

Revelation 20:11-15 (NIV) **11** Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. **12** And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. **13** The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. **14** Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. **15** Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

For those who are written in the Book of Life (i.e those who have accepted Jesus) they will live forever with God!

2 Corinthians 5:1&8 (NIV) 1 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands..... **8** We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

As for those who are thrown into the lake of fire they will be there in torment forever (see verse 10 of Revelation 20 where it refers to Satan's punishment)

And the devil, who deceived them was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and not for ever and ever.

Moms, you give life to an eternal being! What an incredible responsibility!

2) Every child is of great value for they are made in the image of God (at the moment of conception God begins to go to work creating the biology of the child growing inside of you and imprinting on this new life a soul thus stamping on this life the divine image of God)

Genesis 1:27 (NIV) So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Us being in the image of God does not mean we look like God physically. It means we are more than just a physical being. We also possess a soul like God and that we were made for relationships like God. We have a mental capacity where we can think and reason like God. We are moral beings given the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong like God. We are emotional beings with the capacity for relationships where we communicate with one another and express love to one another like God. This is what having a soul imprinted with the image of God gives us.

Listen to how the Psalmist describes the beginning of life in the womb.

Psalm 139:13-15 (NIV) 13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. **14** I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. **15** My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. (both are descriptions indicating the mother's womb)

Moms you have not only been given an eternal soul that will never die, but you have been entrusted with a life that has incredible value as an image bearer of God.

3) Every child has divine purpose for they ultimately belong to the Lord

Psalm 139:16 (NIV) 16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (Before the baby is fully formed in the womb I want you to see that the child has a divine purpose and value)

The question is will we dedicate ourselves to raising that child and nurturing that child unto the Lord? We never know who we are raising and to what purpose they will serve for God's glory.

But parenting is difficult and it is hard! It comes with many challenges and sacrifices! No one ever said it would be easy! Let's take Mary the Mother of Jesus as an example. Now before we look at Mary I know what some of you are thinking. *"Oh great, Mary is our example of the difficulties of Motherhood! How can I live up to that standard? I already struggle as it is! Now I get to compare my life with Mary the mother of Jesus." Let me tell you, my children are no Jesus and I am no Mary!"*

But I am here to tell you that Mary is the perfect example for us to look at because she was no perfect mother and she faced many challenges and struggles. I know we exalt her as such because she gave birth to Jesus, but we need to understand that Mary needed Jesus just like we all do. In fact, Mary's life is relatable to so many different women in so many different ways.

Yes, Mary had great JOY as the special one God chose to birth the Messiah as we see in her glorious song in **Luke 1**

Luke 1:46-55 (NIV) 46 And Mary said, "My soul glorifies the Lord **47** and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, **48** for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, **49** for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. **50** His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. **51** He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. **52** He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. **53** He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. **54** He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful **55** to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

But, she also experienced a lot of DIFFICULT and TRYING CHALLENGES of which many of you may have faced in your lifetime!

1) She was a teenage mom with a child born out of wedlock. Some historical scholars believe Mary was between the ages of 12 and 14 years of age when she gave birth to Jesus, talk about a difficult challenge! She had to grow up real fast! Because of the difficult circumstances surrounding this troublesome conception the angel had to appear to Joseph (her fiance) in a dream to encourage him not to put her away.

Matthew 1:18-20 (NIV) 18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. **419** Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and

yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. **20** But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

The stigma of having a child out of wedlock would be something that would undoubtedly follow her all her life. We get a glimpse of this in John 8 where Jesus is having a dispute with the Pharisees about who He is and Jesus says that if they were children of Abraham (those who had a faith like Abraham and who believed in the coming Messiah like Abraham) they would have believed Jesus to be the Messiah that was promised by God

John 8:39-41 (NIV) 39 “Abraham is our father,” they answered. “If you were Abraham’s children,” said Jesus, “then you would do what Abraham did. **40** As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. **41** You are doing the works of your own father.” Then notice what the Pharisees say next “We are not illegitimate children,” they protested. “The only Father we have is God himself.” It appears that the Pharisees are calling Jesus an illegitimate child referencing the fact that Joseph wasn’t His real father and He had been born to Mary and Joseph before they were legally married. This was obviously a well known scandal that had followed Mary and Jesus throughout their entire lives.

2) Can you imagine the inadequacies Mary must have struggled with while trying to raise the very Son of God? Talk about pressure! Take for example the time they lost Jesus in Jerusalem when He was 12.

Luke 2:43-50 (NIV) 43 After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. **44** Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. **45** When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. **46** After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. **47** Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. **48** When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.” **49** “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” **50** But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Ever felt like a bad parent? Ever feel like you don’t understand your child or that you don’t have a clue what to do or say when certain moments come up in their lives? Have you ever made mistakes as a parent? Well guess what? You are not alone! Mary did too!

3) How about dealing with family drama or trying to be a peace broker amongst your children. Imagine raising 7 or more children in hard economic times. Well that was Mary! In Mark’s Gospel we are given an indication as to how many children Mary actually had.

Mark 6:3 Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. We have indication here that at a bare minimum Jesus had 4 brothers and at least two sisters. How many of us get stressed out with just 1 or 2 kids we are responsible for?

Can you imagine the tension Jesus created in the family dynamic being the older righteous brother and never doing anything wrong? In fact, Jesus' brothers did not even believe in Him being the Messiah until much later after His resurrection. Can you imagine what that must have been like for Mary? She knew who Jesus was and yet tried to deal with her own children rejecting her oldest son and trying to keep the family peace. How about trying to raise 7 children while having limited economic means at her disposal. Mary's calling as a mother was a difficult challenge to say the least.

4) How about trying to parent a family of 7 children as a single mom? This too was Mary! We are not given any indication as to when Joseph died but it seems to be clear that at some point Mary would have to be on her own as a mother. That definitely is the indication we receive based on Mark 6 that we just looked at and it appears that after the mention of Mary and Joseph losing Jesus in Jerusalem we do not hear any more about Joseph indicating that at some point along the way he died. Historical scholars believe that Joseph died some time before Jesus began His earthly ministry. If these were not enough challenges consider this.

5) Mary also experienced the intense heartache and sorrow of watching her son be crucified on the cross! Is there any greater sorrow a parent (especially a mother) could experience? Mary knew first hand the challenges and struggles of being a mother!! There were not many situations as a mother that Mary could not relate to.

She was an unwed teenage mother! She was a widowed single mom! She struggled with her inadequacies as a young mother. She was overwhelmed at times just trying to manage the tensions of life with 7 children. She knew what it was like to just make ends meet! And she knew what it is like to grieve the death of a child. She struggled greatly! But, she also understood that no matter what, God was always with her and He was always faithful to see her through just as He is with all of those who belong to Him. Remember her song from **Luke 1!**

Luke 1:46-55 (NIV) 46 "My soul glorifies the Lord **47** and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, Mary had a personal relationship with God and she trusted Him as her Savior! **48** for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. God never once forgot about her in all of her struggles! From now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. 50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. Mary knew that she was passing on a spiritual legacy to her children. She wasn't just raising up children. She was teaching her children and her children's children and us what it looks like to trust the LORD!

As we close our time together I want to leave us with THREE ENCOURAGEMENTS! Specifically to our Mothers wherever you happen to be in your stage of life. And ultimately to all

of us who have or happen to be at the moment raising children or will be at some point in the near future.

1) **Raising children is the highest calling we have as parents!** You may be doing other things and having other responsibilities, but your greatest impact and responsibility is in nurturing and raising your children up in the Lord!

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIV) Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. **5** Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. **6** These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. **7** Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. **8** Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. **9** Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

And here is the vision for why it needs to be our highest calling.

Deuteronomy 6:2 so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.

2) **God is not looking for perfect parents who have it all together, He is looking for humble parents who are dependent upon Him.** There is grace and forgiveness in Christ. If you didn't have a great role model as a parent, God can redeem your brokenness and break the generational curse by creating a new spiritual heritage with you. God can even overcome all of your flaws and inadequacies if you will just trust Him and humbly walk with Him.

Psalms 25:9 (NIV) He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

James 4:6 (ESV) 6 "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

MOM! You do not have to have it all together! You don't have to be the perfect mom. God can overcome your mistakes. The question is, Will you humbly trust the Lord? Will you depend on HIM!!

3) **The rewards of parenting are oftentimes delayed** - As parents we are sowing seeds and sometimes it takes time for those little seeds to become fruitful. For example, if you want to grow wheat you can plant it and it will grow without much intervention. However, if you want to grow an orchard we need to understand that it will require years of work without an immediate harvest. When it comes to children we are growing an orchard. There is a lot of work involved. Blood sweat and tears where we have tried to cultivate the hearts and minds of our children. We lay awake at night and wonder if we are making any difference. Will my investment of time and energy be for nothing? What looks like a wasted life for Mary as she watches her son brutally crucified from the foot of a Roman cross gives way to a glorious resurrection of which Mary and the world can also partake of through faith. James the half brother of Jesus, one who doubted

who Jesus was originally, eventually comes to faith also and God uses him to lead the church at Jerusalem. Mary's family heritage along with her faith, God used to bring HOPE to a hopeless world! The struggle is real but we see that her struggle pays huge dividends in the end. And so will ours if we will remain diligent and faithful trusting God and stewarding the hearts of our children.

Let's honor our Mother's today and every day! If they are still alive, let's call them often and tell them how much we appreciate them and what they have done for us. Thank them for giving us life! For putting up with us when we were hard to deal with! For sleepless nights when we were sick! For the sacrifices they made so that we could be provided for. If you are like me and you don't have your mother here because she has graduated from this life then thank God for her! Offer Him praise for the time you had with her and make sure you honor her memory by passing on what you gleaned from her life to your children and grandchildren.

So thank you mothers! Thank you for all you do! Remember, being a MOTHER is high calling for you are givers of life and you are a reminder to this world of God's grace! Death reminds us of the curse of sin but your womb and the birth of a child reminds us that God is a God of LIFE and that our lives have divine purpose!

Invitation:

Ask for our mothers to stand and let's pray over them. Mothers, today we want to commission you as those God has called to raise up a generation of children who will worship and serve HIM.

The great commission God gave to us in Matthew 28 is basically an extension of the OT commission God gave His people in Deuteronomy 6. The first disciple we should make is our children. And we should not wait for them to become adults nor should not leave that responsibility to the church. It is our job as parents to disciple our children. To talk to them about God as we **sit at home and when we walk along the road, when we lie down and when we get up**. We should teach them all that Jesus has taught us! Mom's you have a HIGH CALLING! And it is not to be taken lightly! Your children are your first disciples.

Before you can lead your children to Jesus you must first be a follower of Jesus. Mom, are you? If not, will you give your life to Him today?

If you are a follower of Jesus, will you commit to discipling your Children? If you are willing would you take and place your hands out in front of you with your hands open to God and say,

"Lord these children you have entrusted to me I give back to you!"

"I will commit my life to raising them to know of your mercy and love."

"I will seek to teach them how to have a relationship with you."

“When the time comes, I will send them out into the world to be a beacon of light for others!”

Let me PRAY over you!!