

“Who’s Your Mother?”

I Kings 3:16-27

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There was a little boy who was memorizing a verse from his Sunday School Class one day. Later he was having his prayer time with his mom before going to bed and asked her, “Mom, is it true that from the dust we were made and to the dust we’ll return?” His mother looked at him and said, “Well, yes, son, it’s true.” His eyes got a little bigger and he said, “Well, you better look under my bed because there’s somebody under there but I don’t know if they’re coming or going!”

Mothers go through a lot with their children. I know my mother went through a lot with me! Your mother probably went through a lot with you. Yet, mothers rarely get paid back for all their care for their children-at least not on earth.

I struggled this week to put together a Mother’s Day sermon - because I don’t suppose that anything has ever been said or ever will be said that is eloquent enough, or expressive enough, to articulate the true value of a mother...

One mother said, "The joy of motherhood is what a woman experiences when all the children are finally in bed!"

Another woman who had four children was asked, "If you had it all to do over again, would you have children?" "Yes," she replied, "But not the same ones."

One stay-at-home mom wrote this poem:

"Some may climb Mt Everest, in search of thrills galore,
But I scale peaks that rival it, just past the laundry door:
Slopes of socks and underwear, sheer cliffs of shirts and pants.
Oh, yes, I live in mortal fear of a laundry avalanche"

On a more serious note: One day four ordained ministers stood talking and, as so often happens, the conversation soon drifted to shop talk. "I prefer the *King James Version* of Scripture," said one, "for its eloquent use of the English language." A second minister felt no translation could match the *New American Standard* for its faithfulness to the original Greek and Hebrew text. "That may well be," said the

third, "but I prefer the *New International Version* for its contemporary language and easy readability." There was a thoughtful period of silence, and then the fourth minister said, "I like my mother's translation best." It was with some surprise that the others said: "We didn't know that your mother had translated the Bible." "Yes, she did," he replied. "She translated it into her daily life, and it was through her translation that I came to faith."

Few things are more powerful than the tears and prayers of a mother. Few things are more tender than a mother's hug or compassionate touch. Someone has pointed out that of the 69 kings of France only 3 were really loved by their subjects and that these 3 were the only ones reared by their mothers, instead of by tutors or guardians. It just may be true - what Napoleon said, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world."

President Abraham Lincoln, who knew poverty while growing up, said, "No man is poor who has had a godly mother."

It's also good to remember that no gift to your mother can ever equal her gift to you-life.

Speaking of which, today we read about a mother who perhaps some might have thought was only a mother biologically but not emotionally or relationally when learning of how she conceived her child. Nevertheless, she did *then* what many biological moms don't even do *now*: she gave her child the opportunity to live. And then, surprisingly, she went beyond that to demonstrate what true mothers do when facing death, not so much her own death but her child's. We read about her in 1 Kings 3:16-27.

16 Then two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. **17** The one woman said, "Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. **18** Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. And we were alone. There was no one else with us in the house; only we two were in the house. **19** And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. **20** And she arose at midnight and took my son from beside me, while your servant slept, and laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. **21** When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, he was dead. But when I looked at him closely in the morning, behold, he was not the child that I had borne." **22** But the other woman said, "No, the living child is mine, and the dead child is yours." The first said, "No, the dead child is yours, and the living child is mine." Thus they spoke before the king.

23 Then the king said, “The one says, ‘This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead’; and the other says, ‘No; but your son is dead, and my son is the living one.’” **24** And the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So a sword was brought before the king. **25** And the king said, “Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other.”

26 Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, “Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death.” But the other said, “He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him.”

27 Then the king answered and said, “Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother.”

Although the main theme of our passage in its context encompasses the wisdom that God gave King Solomon, one sub-theme involves what a *true* mother is. This is seen even in the life of a woman whom others may have thought could never be a *good* parent as her life had been characterized by a bad profession-selling her body. Yet, we learn from her at least three things about what it means to not just be a true mother to one’s child, but also a true child of our God.

What do we learn?

True mothers...

...Speak the truth in the midst of lies. They are submissive to the truth rather than sidetracked by the lies.

Here this woman was, standing in front of the most powerful person on the planet in that day, but even more significantly becoming the most influential person in the life of her child that day. By standing up for truth in the midst of the lies, she overcame death through life.

A mother talking to an old college friend said, "Remember, before I became a mom I had three theories about raising children? Well, now I have three children and no theories." That mother was also one who stood up for the truth!

When it comes to being a true mother or even grandmother to your children or God’s other children, and becoming a true child of God, the best theories come

from the Word of God, as it's filled with timeless truths we are given by God. Man's Word will sometimes get you somewhere you want to go. Yet, God's Word will always bring you to where you need to go, just as a lie sometimes has temporary power, but truth brings permanent peace.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the TRUTH, and the life..." (John 14:6). When we ourselves speak the truth, we can teach our children the truth, most importantly remembering that with children, more is caught than is taught.

Three of my favorite truths with which to raise godly children or by which to become a godly child are the following:

Proverbs 22:6 "Train up your children in the way they should go, and when they are older they will not turn from it." This verse deals with *discipline*. Note that we are not told how much "older" the child will be when he or she finally "returns to" or does not "turn from" the way s/he should go. Whether a younger or older child, there is hope for the wayward child (1 Cor. 13:4).

Matthew 5:37 "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil." This regards always having *integrity* in knowing that actions speak louder than words and saying what you mean while meaning what you say. This is an important lesson for all of us children.

Matthew 7:12 "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." The "Golden Rule" ultimately has to do with *respect*-for God, for others, and especially for oneself. It is a good day when a parent hears from children who say that they are wise enough to not give to someone what only belongs to their spouses, until their significant others become their spouses, as that's counter-cultural. Since sin has consequences while we are on this earth, why not let your children know that you love them too much to enable them to make the same mistakes you may have made, as a life lived fully for God leads to more life lived with contentment in Christ?

Moms and other parents can find freedom in growing as God's children, which also involves not only speaking the truth but also believing and living the truth even as it applies to our own lives. When we allow Jesus to be our truth when it comes to leading our children or even influencing the children of others, we become free from the burden of thinking it's all up to us when it comes to witnessing a life well lived by them. You see, your child first belonged to God before s/he belonged to you. This should free you from unnecessary burdens,

allowing you to be free to love and lead but not always control the children within your care, as they are ultimately under His care, especially when kept in prayer.

When Jesus said, “I will give you the TRUTH and the truth will set you FREE (John 8:32),” it involved all kinds of freedom; freedom from the fear of failure in raising or influencing children (both younger and older, our own or others’); freedom from the fear of the future (when their actions, attitudes and behavioral patterns are beyond our control-yet within God’s); freedom from having to conform to the ways of this world when it comes to what people tell us is best for our children even when their ways contradict God’s Will (Romans 12:2); Freedom from thinking that we are responsible for our children’s happiness, as we are not, although we are responsible for their well-being. In such a way, we can be care-free without being care-less when it comes to teaching our children well.

Again, first, true mothers of their children and true children of God, speak the truth in the midst of lies (being *submissive* to the truth).

Second, true mothers...

...Put aside their rights for the sake of their children’s needs. They are *sacrificial* in raising their children, more concerned for their children’s well-being rather than their own, being selfless rather than selfish in meeting the mental, emotional, relational, educational, and most of all spiritual needs of their children.

The mother in our passage was willing for her baby to be with somebody else and *live* rather than insisting on her “rights” and letting him *die*. True mothers are a lot like our Lord: They’d rather “let go” and grant life than hold on and cause death. Christ is the Author of Truth and the Author of Life, no matter how a life was conceived. If the way you live your life, whether you feel you have an option or not, is sinful, illegal, or immoral in the eyes of the Author of Life, then you are missing out on God’s best for your life. Nevertheless, God can bring something good out of something bad, and even forgive the bad when we humble ourselves before the Only One who is Good, because God doesn’t see as man sees. In fact, in 1 Samuel 16:7 we are reminded, “...man looks at external appearances, but God looks at the heart.” This mother had a good heart and God gave her a good reward by giving her a good ruling through her Earthly King whose heart was in the hands of our Heavenly King (Proverbs 21:1). The other woman had a heart of selfishness but she had a heart of sacrifice not like the heart of Satan but instead like the heart of our Savior (1 John 4:7-8). King Solomon saw that.

By the way, being a good mom doesn't always require an earth-shattering sacrifice as even a little sacrifice can have a big significance in what a mother teaches her child. One person put it this way:

A mother is a person who, seeing there are only four pieces of pie for five people, promptly announces she never did care for pie.

I recently came across a quote from a mother named Victoria Farnsworth who said, "Not until I became a mother did I understand how much my mother had sacrificed for me. Not until I became a mother did I feel how hurt my mother was when I disobeyed. Not until I became a mother did I know how proud my mother was when I achieved. Not until I became a mother did I realize how much my mother loves me." I think my own mother would have agreed. I know that the mother of my children does.

How willing are you to put aside your rights for the sake of someone else's needs? This is a question regarding what's going on in your heart not only during the "major" moments of life but even the "minor" ones.

Again, true mothers, first, speak the truth in the midst of lies (being submissive to the truth), second, put aside their rights for the sake of their children's needs (being sacrificial to their children rather than serving themselves), and third...

...Are cared for by God because of how they care for their children. They are secure in their Savior.

God took care of the woman in our passage because she spoke the truth and also put aside her rights for the sake of her son's needs. As a result of her looking out for others, God was looking out for her.

Are you willing to take comfort in the truth that God will take care of you so that you can focus more on taking care of others? If so, then you are fit to be a good mother. Also, whether or not you are a *mother*, you are fit to be a good *child* of Our Father who art in heaven while you are on this earth, for Jesus said, "Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is *my* brother and sister and *mother* (Matthew 12:50)."

Susannah Wesley, mother of John Wesley, spent one hour each day praying for her 17 children. In addition, she took each child aside for a full hour every week to discuss spiritual matters. No wonder two of her sons, Charles and John, were used

by God to bring numerous and long-lasting blessings to all of England and much of America.

Unlike Mrs. Wesley, my mother only had 12 children and the mother of my children only has two. Yet, both of these women demonstrated in countless ways to me that giving birth does not make a woman a mother. It takes a special woman to be a mother. A mother is a person who is willing to take the responsibility of investing her life, even including her education, abilities, natural talents, spiritual gifts, and all her experiences in life, into another human being who is totally dependent upon her to do so:

THE ONE WHO FOLLOWS ME

A careful mother I ought to be,
A little one is following me
I do not dare to go astray
For fear she'll go the selfsame way.
I cannot once escape her eyes,
Whatever she sees me do, she tries.
Like me she says she's going to be
That little one who follows me.
She thinks that I am good and fine,
Believes in every word of mine;
The base in me she must not see
That little one who follows me.
I must remember as I go
Through summer's sun and winter's snow
I am building for the years to be
That little one who follows me.

Let us pray.