

Joyfully Accepting the Sacrifices of Motherhood

Occupation - Housewife

What am I doing with my life?

Well - I am only a housewife.

I'm a homework helper, expert on spelling,
The keeper of secrets without telling.
A Band-Aider, a hurt-feeling mender,
A peanut butter and jelly vendor.

I'm a bed maker, laundry supervisor,
Child disciplinarian, a chastiser.
A thermometer reader, cookie baker,
A spring planter - weeder, a fall leaf raker.

I'm a table duster, vacuumer- mopper,
Little league rooter, argument stopper.
A gourmet chef, hamburger fryer,
Food purchasing agent, clothing buyer.

I'm a dog minder, lost-items finder,
Everyone's daily agenda reminder.
A nose wiper, an aching-neck rubber,
Itching-back scratcher, dirty head scrubber.

That's what I'm doing with my life;
You see, I'm only a housewife!

Adapted from a poem
by Colleen Stanly Bare

Let's begin our discussion by looking at what a mother is. A mother is a woman who has given birth to or has adopted a child, and as such, is responsible for that child's welfare. But there are many aspects involved in motherhood beyond the physical care of a child.

What are some lessons we can learn from mothers in the Bible? Hannah is a good example of a godly mother. She yearned and prayed for a child. She felt disgraced by her barrenness. She also recognized that children are a "heritage of the Lord" and needed to be brought up for him. How different Hannah's attitude was from the attitude that is so often found today. Too many mothers see their children as a burden.

Hannah was so devoted to Samuel's upbringing that she even denied herself the privilege of going to the temple to worship. "But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever." Her time was devoted to her child. We need to recognize that raising children means that some of our goals and interests need to be cut back or postponed until the children are grown. Sacrificing means to give something good to someone; will our time be given to our children or will we spend it on ourselves?

Moses' mother had a vision for her son. She understood that the family was God's plan and so she was not afraid of the king's wicked command. She was willing to take a risk to provide for Moses, because she had a goal. She wanted him to be a godly man, and after the princess found him in the river, Moses' mother knew she had just a short time to do her work of teaching and training. Even the twenty years most of our children are at home just isn't very long. They grow up all too soon. Let's not give those precious years away by putting our children out to babysitters when it isn't necessary. We don't need to be in a hurry to have the children, especially the girls, go out to work. There are so many things they need to learn first. Money will not replace our relationship.

God has a very special plan for women. Many women think it is a great thing to be successful in business or a profession; but it is a much greater work to raise a boy or girl who will live for God and be an influence for the right. God made woman for this work. We were physically created to carry, give birth to, and nourish an infant. A woman's emotions are made to bond with her children, to hurt and feel with them, to find fulfillment in being a mother. We recognize that fathers also have a very important place in their children's lives, but we are especially considering us as mothers. There is truth in the saying: "The hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world."

"To fail to plan, is to plan to fail." Too many times parenthood is approached haphazardly without an understanding of what God wants to accomplish in the family. Such a tremendous undertaking nourishing eternal souls certainly needs goals. What are our goals? First of all, we want our children to be Godfearing. "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." Our training, our education, our discipline, even our family time, needs to be helping our children to the ultimate goal of: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

The second commandment is: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." To be a good citizen, caring for others and being a good influence in the community, is another goal. Respecting the law, being a good worker, and helping with community needs are all part of loving our neighbor. Children who learn to look out only for themselves become very self-centered and do not benefit God or man.

Most children themselves eventually become parents. It is at home that children will learn the skills needed for housekeeping, caring for babies, and disciplining children. It is sad when a girl gets married and does not know how to cook, sew or keep house-which is to be her work. It is more serious yet when a couple has children and they are ignorant of how to teach and take care of them.

Godly mothers seek to glorify the Lord rather than self. We need the Lord's help, and He has not left us without directions. Let's examine Titus 2:4-5. "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

"To be sober" is to think clearly with a disciplined mind. The mother who becomes easily frustrated or who pities herself is going to have difficulty training her children properly. "To love their husbands" is of utmost importance. Lack of love between parents will bring confusion and insecurity to the children.

"To love their children" may seem like an unnecessary command. But God knows our tendency to selfishness and we need to be reminded that we must sacrificially love our children.

"To be discreet." It certainly takes good judgement, self-control and temperance to be a good mother. A mother does become tired and frustrated at times, and she may not feel like fixing a meal, but her children need her and she cannot go away a lot just to "get away from it all."

" Chaste" means to be modest and pure. Homes are built on love and mothers who are careless with their bodies and affections will produce children who have no foundation on which to build their lives and future homes.

To be " keepers at home" is so important. God didn't say this just because He wants to make us stay at home, but because that is where the children are and our children need us. Good mothering cannot take place when the mother is holding a job, constantly shopping, or trying to find her fulfillment with friends. The sacrifices which we will be looking at are all involved in being a home keeper.

We said earlier that a sacrifice is something given up for some other person or cause. Sometimes those sacrifices are difficult; at other times we may not even realize that we are making a sacrifice. We do it every day. Many fathers need to go to work five days a week, when they would much rather work at home. It's a sacrifice they make. On the other hand, mothers usually need to stay at home, when perhaps they would enjoy being out. Can we give up our desires for the children's benefit?

When we were young we may have had lots of activities and perhaps a job. Can we give up some of our social life for our children's sake, or do we need to be on the go all the time? Yes, it is important for a busy mother to have friends. We need the input and encouragement of other mothers, and let's not forget that grandmothers can be a help, too. We need to have someone to talk to on an adult level. But we need to use good judgment and keep a balance.

Don't let shopping become a way of " getting away from it all." Does an eight or ten hour shopping day really provide much rest for a mother? If mothers need so many breaks, how do we think babysitters cope with children who are not theirs... and who may be almost strangers to them. Certainly shopping needs to be done, so why not wait until Daddy gets home and go together-make a family time of it. It's a great time to teach the children about finances, stewardship, patience, and public behavior.

It can be a trying time when Johnny has been sick for a week, and I have had to change my plans. How do I view that time? Am I ready to climb the wall, or do I see it as precious time spent with Johnny? God knew children would become sick, and He knew they would need Mommy when they are sick. It can be a time of getting closer to our child.

Sometimes mothers have a hard time getting all the work done. And there is a lot of work. There's cleaning, meals to prepare, garden things to put up, and much more. That's why we need to be keepers at home. The work simply will not get done if we go all day...go in the evenings (even in so-called church work)...and then sleep late in the morning. Our mothers and our grandmothers couldn't be going all the time and still get their work done...neither can we. After the children are grown we can enjoy the extras; but right now, while they are at home, let's treasure these times. We only have the children once. If we joyfully sacrifice now, we will have precious memories in the years to come.

Fixing meals, doing the laundry, housecleaning, sewing and buying clothes these are opportunities to use your skills and time for the family. This is part of being a virtuous woman. " She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands...She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household..." (Proverbs 31:13, 15). Yes, housework can become a chore at times; just like all work does; but perhaps your husband will give a hand. Maybe he would help plan some meals, or maybe he would take the children outside for a while so you can work uninterrupted. (It probably wouldn't be the best idea though, to ask him to sew a dress for your little girl.) If your girls are in their teens, let them be responsible for supper some evening; they enjoy it. There's

nothing wrong with letting Junior bake some cookies; and he really does need to learn to wash dishes. God does not expect us mothers to do it all by ourselves; but let's put ourselves into this work. If we keep in mind that we are working for our loved ones, it puts joy in our work instead of drudgery.

Did you ever think of teaching and discipline as being a sacrifice. Your maturity, your experience, and your direction from God are all assets to be devoted to the good of your family. Disciplining is probably the hardest part of what God has asked us to do. We can include a lot of teaching in everyday happenings, but there are times when we must take special time to teach.

Much of the stress in homes comes from a lack of discipline. "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul. (Proverbs 29:17) When children do not obey, or quarrel a lot, or talk back it is stressful and makes us weary. But, whose fault is it? If God says we are to correct our children, we can certainly find strength and courage in the knowledge that His directions work; and if they don't seem to, we have failed not God. Our children must learn that "No" means no; that "Do" means do; and that "Let it alone" means to let it alone. If we are not going to make Johnny let the magazine rack alone, then we shouldn't say anything about it. Does he know that we mean what we say? If the children are not required to submit and obey, they learn to take a perverse pleasure in being naughty. And that won't leave them when they become older.

Don't be afraid to start young. Two years old is late to start teaching them obedience. Too many times children are not given credit for their understanding. They can understand what it means to sit quietly in church; what it means to quit crying; that it is wrong to bite their brother or sister; that walls are not made to write on; that they can be as content with the father as they are with the mother. WalMart or church is not a good place for us to start training. We need to do it at home and start early. Yes, there will be times the children need correction in public places, but it will be so much easier if they learn obedience at home.

Does all this mean a lot of effort? Yes. Does it mean a lot of time? Yes. Is it easy? No. Is it worth it? Absolutely. Furthermore, it is what God requires of us.

There are so many ways to give to your family. How about the ouchies that need a kiss? Would you have enjoyed being a nurse? Never fear, the family will provide plenty of chances to do some nursing. There are times of sickness and accidents, or perhaps a hospital experience. Susie's homework will give you a chance to be a teacher. And there are plenty of times to be a comforter and listener. Maybe Junior feels snubbed by his friends at school. Maybe Susie is struggling with becoming a young lady. Do we hear when our children talk to us, or are we too busy in our own world?

The title of this topic mentions that these our sacrifices need to be made with joy. How can we maintain joy? We need to keep our goals in mind. If we lose sight of God's purpose for the family, it is easy to become discouraged.

Keep in mind that our children are eternal souls. Raise the children for the Lord. The way we raise our children is the platform they build upon. It is easy to become slack in training if we forget that our teaching and discipline is not just for our benefit, but for the child's good. It takes work to make a beautiful garden, and it takes work to have beautiful children. Pray for your children, and pray for wisdom and direction. "Who is sufficient for these things?" It is a tremendous responsibility to rear children, and we cannot do it by ourselves. We need the help of One who loves our children even more than we do. Looking to the Father will help us keep the right perspective and attitude.

Surround your children and their father with love. Love is what makes the sacrifices worthwhile and brings joy. Love takes the edge off the times when things are difficult and makes it

much easier to exercise patience. Love gives our children security in us as parents so they do not need to look elsewhere.

There is a great reward in making sacrifices joyfully. It will produce content, obedient children who love their parents. It will bring peace and rest in the home. " Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee...thy children like olive plants round about thy table."

We need to take time for our children. If we don't, the day will come when they do not have time for us. Cherish this time of life-all too soon the children are grown. " Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them...."

Kathryn Miller