

## **Spiritual Preparation For Motherhood**

### What is motherhood?

"A partnership with God is Motherhood,  
What strength, what purity, what self-control,  
What love, what wisdom would belong to her  
Who helps God fashion an immortal soul.."

The God given privilege of bearing children is a high calling, noble work, and great opportunity. "Upon us, mothers, rests one of the greatest responsibilities in the world. When God entrusts a new precious soul into our arms we are given the awesome responsibility of leading that soul back to Him. Unless that is our goal, we have no right to bring them into the world.

Many of us here tonight are mothers already and we know that in motherhood there is no such thing as 'off duty.' A mother's head may be full of trouble, and her hands full of work and yet she needs to be inspiring her children to choose the good and true by her own good example.

### Home Duties

Though life may seem useless and empty and vain,  
Ours is the task to help others in pain-  
Soothe little scratches and kiss the bruised knee,  
Patch little troubles and peacemakers be,  
Nothing outstanding - no fame will we know;  
We work for our families, helping them grow.

We homemakers aren't sent to a far, foreign field;  
Our home is the place where to Christ we may yield,  
And truly be Christians, doing God's will,  
In these little duties our mission fulfill.  
Humdrum occupation? In a way it is so,  
But it takes our very best efforts, we know.

You wonder perhaps what satisfaction can come  
From the small, humble duties required of some?  
Serving at home to women was given,  
To let our light shine and to gain all of heaven.  
Though some may belittle, may our motto e'er be:  
"As you've done unto others you've done unto Me."  
-Doreen Giesbrecht Goossen

Who should be preparing for motherhood? Once during a conversation a woman asked, "How soon should a young mother start praying for her child?" An old family physician happened to be in the group, and he replied, "Twenty years before it is born."

The burden of this essay tonight is this: Are we preparing the prospective mothers among us for the awesome responsibility of motherhood?

Who are the prospective mothers? Pause a minute and glance down at that little girl on your lap or sitting beside you. Think also of you school-girl at home tonight or your teenage girls already beginning to blossom into young womanhood. How about your daughter that dating, engaged, or newly married? Are you preparing them, have you prepared them for the role of motherhood into which God may call them: Young girls, are you familiar with the duties of motherhood? Are you taking opportunities to learn what working with children is like on a day after day basis?

I know of only one sure way to discover how we as mothers can know whether we are preparing our

daughters for motherhood and that is by looking into the mirror of God's Word to discover what God expects of mothers. Ezra 7:10, 8:21 says, "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgements. Then I proclaimed a fast there, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a right way for us and for our little ones." May we also search the Word with openness and determination to do whatever the Word says and to teach the same to our little ones. It's the only way the home will survive in this day when Satan is determined to destroy God's beautiful plan for families. We can only grow closer to God as we are willing to accept God's Word exactly as He gave it. Remember, we are no more spiritual than what we are scriptural.

Why is it necessary to be prepared for motherhood? Most girls become wives and mothers. To bring other beings into the world makes one tremendously responsible before God for their care and training. Each mother leaves her imprint in the world whether for good or bad. Can so great a task be looked upon lightly and entered in upon with little or no preparation?

If a person knew he was to be a teacher or a doctor, would he put off all thought and preparation for his life's work until he was ready to begin? Do our ministers wait till they're behind the pulpit to prepare for a sermon? How much preparation do our young girls have before that moment when their firstborn is placed into their arms?

Motherhood and a good mother do not necessarily go together. Giving birth to a baby does not transform one into a saint. We know that is true by the thousands of babies that are born today into the worst of circumstances or killed before they're even born.

God has fitted girls by nature to find fulfilment and satisfaction in motherhood. Many years of hard work and preparation need to come between her chosen calling and her success in mothering.

One cannot be totally prepared for something they've never experienced, but the more prepared we are the better things will go and frustrations can be kept to a minimum simply because we knew what to expect and what would be expected of us.

Motherhood is a role in which we will either become more emotionally and spiritually mature or else become frustrated and resentful depending on our attitudes and priorities.

How then can our daughters be prepared for motherhood? We must first of all discover what God's divine plan for women is.

The world says, "Have a career and earn lots of money. There's no satisfaction in the domestic role as wife. Housekeeping and tending children is boring. It takes lots of money these days to live so a woman ought to help ease the husbands load of providing for the family." Is that scriptural?

Since the beginning of time man has been recognized as the provider. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread, till thou return to the ground." Gen. 3:19, was the command given to men not to women. Within men God has created the ability to take the burden of making a living on his shoulders by toiling, sweating, and struggling against the elements and oppositions of life to bring home what is needed for the family he loves. To rob a man of this struggle is to rob him of his manliness.

Men have the inborn need to surpass women as the provider. To have women do just as good or better in the work world, advance to higher positions, and bring home pay checks cause men to feel threatened and the beautiful order of roles in the home is threatened.

More than half of America's homemakers are working outside the home. This business of equal rights has harmed our country in a most definite way. As women become more capable, efficient, and independent, men feel less needed and less of a man. Marriages suffer because men are less tender toward their wives because, you see, it is our dependence on our husbands that helps awaken their feelings of tenderness towards us.

When a woman works outside the home by choice, she tends to lose some of her womanliness and feminine qualities. When women attempt to play a part not intended for them they sacrifice some of their own special beauty and grace.

What then was God's command to women? Gen 3:16 says, "Thou shalt bring forth children." 1Tim 5:14 "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house." 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...”

According to these verses God’s will for most young women is to become a wife and mother. Their role is to love their husbands and children, plus taking care of the house. According to these scriptures this is God’s plan for women. Now stop with me a moment and consider. Are we training our young women to become loving wives and gentle mothers who know how to prepare food and clothing but most of all to be happy and satisfied to fill that role? In the office, the store, or the factory? Does bagging groceries or programming computers have anything to do with preparing our girls to enjoy homemaking, to keep their spending to a minimum so as to keep within their husbands earnings? Does the noise of machines or the answering of telephones prepare a girl to take time to talk to little children, to understand their needs, to find joy in seeing the freezer fill up with the summer’s harvest in spite of an aching back and stained hands? Does it present a problem for girls who were used to earning \$5.00 an hour or more to suddenly work hard all day and sometimes be up part of the night for no pay at all? Is it any wonder that even among our people we have wives and mothers who struggle with the adjustments of marriage and motherhood? Can we expect otherwise if we are failing to follow God’s plan?

Why do we need to send our girls out into the world or away from the home atmosphere to work? Is it really because there’s not enough to do at home? Some mothers get very little help at home from their daughters because they work away full time and need their spare minutes to wash their hair, make new dresses, and get ready for evening activities and weekend dates. Mothers these days need electric dishwashers and sigh exhausted at the end of the day because they are just about as busy as when their children were small.

Maybe if our big girls were more available we could get back to some of the domestic basics like bread baking and homemade foods instead of canned soups and packaged foods. It seems to me that when girls grow up and are able to handle more of the work at home that our middle aged mothers ought to have more time to write letters to those who are lonely, visit shut-ins, and study to teach Sunday School lessons.

If a home is blessed with several out-of-school aged girls, what congregation is there that has no busy mothers with several little children who would be so glad to have a capable girl to help a day or so a week with her work? Is that a dying art among us? Is working in other homes beneath the dignity of our teenage girls these days? When do we train our young women to be good wives, mothers, and housekeepers? After they are married?

While preparing for this essay several sisters shared with me that they received their best training for marriage and motherhood while helping in homes where there was a new baby and other little children. My own experience was the same aside from my own home where I got my best training, I also have many memories of a home where I most often worked. That mother unknowingly, taught me many worthwhile things. I was always able to hear which room she was working in because of her continual singing. I learned lessons on child training from her by observing why and how she disciplined her little ones. I observed her busy hands and her zeal in gardening.

Over the past few years I’ve been observing some girls who are scripturally being prepared for motherhood in this way and to me they appear to be good mothers in the making.

Possibly the best way to prepare our daughters for motherhood is by setting a good example for them. So you want your daughter to become a mother just like you? Is there any area you would want them to do better? Make that your goal and by God's help you can grow in that area.

A mother tells the story of how she went into her garden to work one day, and when she looked around she saw her little girl taking long steps. She said, “Nell, what are you doing?” The little girl replied, “I am stepping in your tracks, Mother, and I know if I step in you tracks, I won't get any thorns in my feet.” This mother said that she prayed right there that God would help her to be a true Christian so her boys and girls could follow her to heaven.

How do you respond when things go wrong or someone in the family isn't cooperating? By your example, are the children learning that you raise your voice and explode when you're displeased? Do they

gather from your attitudes that children are just a lot of work and being a mother is so frustrating?

Teach them by your example to be gentle and affectionate. We scold them when they fight or are unkind to each other but how often do we compliment them when they play nicely and are kind to each other? When I observe my children being gentle and kind I like to say, "I think you'll make a good mama someday because you're so gentle," or "I think you'll be a kind daddy to your children because you are learning to be kind now." What do you suppose a compliment like that does? Of course, it makes them want to do more of what caused you to be pleased with them.

When one of our babies was little, a family came to visit us that had mostly school age children and a few of them were teenagers. Of course, the girls all wanted turns to hold the baby. What impressed me was that the teenage boy also wanted to hold the baby, That boy had learned to show an interest in children and that it is manly to be gentle.

Talk to your children about character traits they should be developing years before they are even thinking about marriage or parenthood. If our children are used to discussing these things on a day by day basis, communication with not be so difficult when they reach the difficult years of adolescence. A girl's most intimate friend ought to be her mother

Do you mothers allow your children to enjoy the new baby and to observe your care of it when possible? It's a good opportunity to teach our little girls about the joys of motherhood.

I once heard a class of kindergarten children all say what they wanted to be when they grow up. Out of about eight girls several wanted to be nurses or have some other occupations but only one little girl proudly stated, "When I grow up I want to be a mama!" While it is important that our girls understand that God doesn't call all girls to marriage and motherhood we still should not encourage our daughters to desire a career but rather teach them the danger of it.

The value of mother and daughter working side by side cannot be overestimated. One eight year old girl said, "I always watch my mother fold wash but she never lets me help." Let's not lose these opportunities to work and talk together.

It's important that our children feel loved and needed in order for them to grow up feeling secure. The responsibilities of parenthood are much easier to face if one has had the security he needed while growing up. Some may say, "Well, isn't it enough proof that I love my children by washing their clothes and making their meals?" I think that children of all ages need to be told and shown that they are loved. We need to do things with our children not just for them. Love also is shown by rules, boundaries, consistent discipline and correction.

They tell us that there is one thing that will never fully escape from our memory; that is our memories of home.

"Children grown and scattered  
Far away may roam.  
But they will remember  
The one house called home.

May God help us to live tenderly and unselfishly so that our children's memories of mother will be an inspiration to them.

What spiritual qualities of character should young women seek to develop in order to become God-honoring mothers?

The most important quality, it seems to me, is selflessness. She who is selfish looks always to her own pleasures first and is displeased if her own desires are not met.

We need to remember that the nature of every human is selfish. It is only as our hearts are cleansed by the blood, our spirits are broken by falling on the Rock which is Christ and the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts that the beauty of Jesus will shine from our life. The only way to victory in any area of our life is death to self. (Gal.5:24 "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.")

Rebellion to our parents, husbands, or any other authority is a sure sign that we have not died to self but rather that it is ruling us. What's wrong when we pout, speak crossly, or are so critical that we're hard to live with? Self is not broken if we refuse to take any helpful suggestions from others without justifying ourselves.

Motherhood is very demanding. If a girl enters into motherhood used to doing as she pleases, going where she pleases, whenever she wants to, she is headed for some real frustration. Babies do not care if

mother is tired and would rather sleep. If they are hungry or wet they want to be cared for now. Clothes need to be washed and the next meal planned whether you would rather do something else or not.

Mothers, we do our children a great favor if we will deal with the selfishness our children express while they are still small. Children need to be spanked for disobedience and also for wrong attitudes. If wrong attitudes are not dealt with quickly and firmly the child will become an unhappy person and hard to deal with. Remember, our children are not obedient until they do what they're told to do, when they're told to do it, and with a happy heart. Children will find it easier to yield their wills in obedience to God and His Word if their wills have been brought into subjection to obey their parents while young.

Unselfishness expresses itself in sacrifice and servant-hood. Gal.. 5:13 says "...by love serve one another." Someone has said, "Motherhood is the desire of every wife's heart and a baby is a dream come true, but sacrifice on and on is a mothers price."

Especially during a child's early years, mother's role is that of a servant. Nine months of waiting for the blessed event are rewarded with interrupted sleep at night, more loads of laundry, constant care, and a loss of one's freedom. Though motherhood is an area of life which has many trials, there are many rewards, and great blessings to be experienced.

A little girl once asked her daddy, "What's a slave?" He explained as best he could. When he finished she looked at him and said, "Is that what mommy is?"

Young girls, now is the time to develop an unselfish character. There is real joy in serving others. This poem has meant much to me for many years.

#### Others

Lord, help me live from day to day  
in such a self-forgetful way,  
That even when I kneel to pray,  
My prayers will be for Others.

And when my work on earth is done,  
And my new work in heaven's begun,  
May I forget the crown I've won,  
While thinking still of Others.

Help me in all the work I do  
To ever be sincere and true  
And know that all I do for You  
Must needs be done for Others.

Others, Lord, yes Others,  
Let this my motto be;  
Help me to live for Others  
That I may live like Thee.

Let self be crucified and slain,  
And buried deep, and all in vain  
May efforts be to rise again,  
Unless to live for others.

Charles D. Meigs 1902

1Tim 2:24 "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient." Gentleness, kindness, and patience are more spiritual qualities that every young girl should seek to develop. The mark of a beautiful spirit is unflinching tenderness towards others. Great characters are gentle. They live in a world of peace and love. Love never storms or blusters. Love is never harsh but speaks calmly in a sweet, low voice with touches of courtesy.

Kind words for others always lift and encourage. One should develop the habit of saying nice things about a person under discussion. This indicates a wealth of mind and a gracious considerate heart. In Prov. 31:26 the ideal woman is said to open her mouth in kindness and her tongue is governed by the law of kindness.

Home is the place to begin showing kindness. What you put into your home now is what you are going to put into your life later. Home is the laboratory where you learn to meet life. If you put thorns in your mothers pillow now, and speak roughly to those you live with today, there will be thorns scattered down the pathway of your life and you will be wounding the feet of those who come near you and you will be tramping on thorns beneath your own feet. The things you put into your home today you are going to put into life after awhile. If you put love, obedience, thoughtfulness, and tender affection you will be a scatterer of gladness

and much appreciated by those who know you. She who allows the Spirit to bear the fruit of gentleness in her life refuses to quarrel, argue, or speak sharply to her brothers and sisters or anyone else.

The girl who is learning day by day to be a good daughter at home and a good sister to the younger children is also learning how to, in time, make a good wife and mother. Every truly beautiful character is at its best at home.

Little children quickly learn to love and prefer those older children who are gentle and kind. I've observed children who adore the youth who will take the time to hold them, read to them, look into their eyes, and listen to their childish chatter.

Do you include children in your life, girls? Maybe it's little brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, a Sunday School class, or the little children at your church. Each girl should learn to love little children and make them her friends. Teaching school provides one with a good opportunity to learn to relate to little children.

Someone has said, "Every girl at eleven and twelve should be a little partner to her mother; she should enter into all of the home life and plans with a gleeful zest and gladness. From thirteen to sixteen a girl should be a little sister to her mother, entering into the home life and plans with a smile. At sixteen a girl should begin to mother her mother, giving her those touches of thoughtful kindness that will let her know that now, after the years of pouring forth she is receiving beautiful returns."

You teenage girls are coming to some of your last years at home. Get busy and be the love and sunshine makers in your home. Now is the time for you to return loving kindness and helpfulness for all the sacrifice and care your parents have invested in you. Your love, obedience, and cooperation can make these years some of the sweetest your parents have ever known.

Conviction and faith are also necessary spiritual qualities in becoming a God-honoring mother. In order to have faith unfeigned as did mother Eunice and grandmother Lois we need to spend time each day in Bible reading and prayer, seeking to develop strength of character.

May God bless the dear mothers-to-be, and help them to get ready for the work that will be theirs.

Gloria Herr

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