

Mommas Helping Mommas

I never preached on raising kids before I had children. In fact, most of the time I talk about parenting is in the context of Mother or Father's day, but even so, I've kept it pretty basic. Why? I just don't feel like I've got enough of experience yet to be an effective counselor, though God's word does outline the principles (so I keep to that). But as time goes on, you feel more comfortable offering some guidance, do you not, to those you may be able to help or guide. It's not that God's word is lacking guidance, but it's that you've had more time to put it into practice and have learned things over time. Looks like I waited 7 years before I taught on marriage. I've taught on motherhood a handful of times. I've taught on fatherhood a few times, but they have all been on Mother and Father's day. I've tried to not be dogmatic because I truly do feel like I'm still learning. In other words - I actually don't want to get too deep into the nuances of raising children.

But you know what's great? God knew that many men, whether they had years of parenting behind them or not, would not appreciate what it is to be a mother. Imagine that! The Lord knows this and has equipped us as a spiritual family. You know who can help mothers out far more than I could?

- **Titus 2:1-14** But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.
 - The older teach the younger. God is not divorced from the reality in which we live. He understands the practicalities of life. He planned this out before the world was created. He never intended for us to be alone. Older women teaching younger women is part of God's plan. However, not all older women in this world are qualified to counsel, as you know. But, women who have been walking in His kingdom for a good while should be. Women who have not only known His word, but have had the opportunity to put it into practice over a long period of time. There are mothers who have never had a mother present, or have, but they didn't serve as godly examples. Do we underestimate the value of older, wise, godly mothers?
 - One hurdle we have is that we, at times, struggle to see a local fellowship as family. This is a two way street. It requires humility from those who are younger. We have to see that while we may be intelligent, there's a difference between brains and wisdom. You cannot rush wisdom. It comes over time. As Solomon wrote, "**Proverbs 4:7** The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight." A wise person will seek guidance from those who have gone before them. I have truly been encouraged as a minister to see this in action. Many young people never ask for help and have a demeanor that they have it figured out and have plenty advice for others.

Then you have those, humble souls, who seek help from others. Those are the kind who end up great counselors. However, this shouldn't be completely on the back of the youth. We need our older brothers and sisters in Christ to take the initiative. We need you to help those younger in the faith. Let's be thinking about that and how we're doing at NC. Many times you have the answers to issues a younger person isn't even aware they have, because they don't know what's around the corner.

So, while I encourage all my sisters in Christ to reach out to one another because it will be helpful and powerful, I have a few minutes to discuss some feedback. Let me read these to you. I've edited a bit for the sake of time and space, so hopefully I've done this justice.

- "I have poured out a lot of time and made choices that provide lots of opportunity to be deeply connected in communication with each of my kids . . . Also I've shown my kids my weaknesses, and show them what repentance and forgiveness looks like."
- "Time sails by so quickly. Too often we think there will be time to do something the next day or the next week but time gets away from us . . . I pray that mothers (also fathers) would bring up their children having set the example for a Godly home and provided them the tools needed for their children to be equipped to establish their own Godly home."
- "1 Peter 3:4 - you should be known for the beauty that comes from within, unfolding beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which is so precious to God."
- "Chapter One, Sleep Deprivation..... The early years. Bedtime is quick but important. Bedtime stories, reading out loud from day one. Even if it is a recipe from a cookbook. Time for bedtime prayers and talking about a memory verse. The Psalms are great for a one verse discussion . . . When the lights go out , lie in the bed for a minute as this is the precious time when sometimes the hurts, joys, guilt, and deep questions come."
- "I guess mainly I've been thinking that I'm not really qualified to give advice and maybe that's the best advice I can give. I would say, that I just want to tell the young mothers or moms-to-be that they should expect to make mistakes. They are going to have to apologize to their kiddos from time to time and that's okay . . . Also, I guess I would tell them to be patient with their husbands (especially when their kids are young). There is a reason God gave us the family roles he did, and most women just seem to have an easier time adjusting to parenting than men."
- "One of the most important things we remind young moms/couples is: Yes the kids require lots of time, effort and energy but you must make time for you and your husband . . . Be a parent first & foremost, not your child's buddy. Enjoy the experience and realize you will make mistakes. We all do - just learn from them."

Here are my two take aways from this and I hope I've done it justice:

- **Love your children.** They come into the world and before you know it they're gone. You only have so much time with them before you let them go. We live in a time when life is all about you. Don't get me wrong - I think we all need breathers. Jesus needed time alone to rest with His disciples. I was talking to one of you recently about this principle. Mothers could really benefit from some extra hands, could they not? I know this can be abused, but I hope we know what we're talking about. So many cultures really do raise a

child together, so hands are more readily available. However, this isn't what I'm talking about. We're talking about mother's of this world who are more focused on themselves. I read an article this week about a famous woman who celebrated her daughter's birthday. She went on and on (over the top in my opinion) about her daughter (we're attributing way too much wisdom to children and calling them our "best friends" which backfires), but then made a statement that I've seen more than once these days. She talked about how her child is most happy when she sees her mom happy and living her life to the fullest. Does God want us to love ourselves? Yes, in an appropriate context. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. He did not intend for any of us to be self-centered. No one.

- **2 Timothy 3:1-5** "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people."
- It's good to remember that your children will seek someone to lead them. You want it to be you, but if it's not, who will it be? It's true that someone with a bad example can still find a good one (**Ezekiel 18**), but what if they don't?
- Communication is key. How often you communicate is a basic indicator of almost any relationship you have. Too many families struggle with communication. You know how to have great communication during rough times or when issues occur? Have great communication when things are going well and there are areas to be praised and recognized. If you only have "heart to hearts" with your kids when there's trouble, what does that really say?
- Part of them having a godly home of their own requires they appreciate the authority of God and your authority. If not, they will seek their own way. Let's remember a few passages:
 - Proverbs 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.
 - Proverbs 29:17 Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.
 - Proverbs 13:24 Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.
 - Proverbs 19:18 Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.
 - Proverbs 22:15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.
 - Proverbs 23:13 Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die.
 - Proverbs 29:17 Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

- **Be gracious with yourself.** You're going to fail. You need to be gracious with yourself and your children need to see that, because you are "god" to them.
 - Since you are like "god" to them, you set the tone for the God they will serve. God wants to lead them. God invests in them. He listens to them. He wants to talk to them. He loves them. He will show grace to them. Children, God showers grace on your mommas just like He will you some day, because He loves you. He gave you your mothers because He cares for you.