

TITUS 2:3-5

MOTHERS ARE MADE, NOT BORN

“Older women likewise are to be reverent in behaviour, 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.”¹

Erma Bombeck was a delightful humorist. She wrote primarily out of her own experience as a woman, as a wife and as a mother. She had the uncanny ability to see the humour in everyday events. She spoke a great truth in telling the story of God making a mother.

By the time the Lord made mothers, he was into his sixth day of working overtime. An angel appeared and said “Why are you spending so much time on this one?”

And the Lord answered and said, “Have you seen the spec sheet on her? She has to be completely washable, but not plastic, have 200 movable parts, all replaceable, run on black coffee and leftovers, have a lap that can hold three children at one time and that disappears when she stands up, have a kiss that can cure anything from a scraped knee to a broken heart, and have six pairs of hands.”

The angel was astounded at the requirements for this one. “Six pairs of hands! No Way!”

The Lord replied, “Oh, it’s not the hands that are the problem. It’s the three pairs of eyes that mothers must have! One pair of eyes is to see through the closed doors when she asks, ‘What are you kids doing in there?’ Another pair in the back of her head that sees what she shouldn’t but what she has to know. And of course the ones here in front that can look at a child when he goofs up and say, ‘I understand and I love you,’ without uttering so much as a word.”

The angel tried to stop the Lord, “This is too much work for one day. Wait until tomorrow to finish.”

“But I can’t!”, the Lord protested, “I am so close to finishing a creation that is so close to my own heart. She already heals herself when she is sick AND can feed a family of six on a pound of hamburger and can get a nine year old to stand in the shower!”

The angel moved closer and touched the woman. “But you have made her so soft, Lord.”

“She is soft,” the Lord agreed, “but I have also made her tough. You have no idea what she can endure or accomplish.”

“Will she be able to think?” asked the angel.

The Lord replied, “Not only will she be able to think, she will be able to reason and negotiate.”

The angel then noticed something and reached out and touched the woman’s cheek. “Oops, it looks like you have a leak with this model. I told you that you were trying to put too much into this one.”

“That’s not a leak,” the Lord objected. “That’s a tear!”

“What’s the tear for?” the angel asked.

The Lord said, “The tear is her way of expressing her joy, her sorrow, her disappointment, her pain, her loneliness, her grief and her pride.”

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The angel was impressed. “You are a genius Lord. This woman is amazing.”

As an aside of greatest significance, I must say that the greatest role any woman can play is not to be successful in breaking the glass ceiling, or to succeed in her chosen profession, or to gain adulation from adoring masses, but to have her children rise up and call her blessed. Mothers that merit our blessing are precisely those that are instructed in righteousness.

Most of us would feel that Bombeck wrote masterfully what we feel concerning mothers. However, godly mothering does not just happen. A variety of influences unite to produce godly mothers that bless their children and ultimately bless a nation. There is undoubtedly a major contribution of a woman’s own mother and grandmother in many instances. However, the general attitudes and expectations of society are also important. The congregation can, and should play a great role in encouraging godly mothers according to the Apostle Paul.

Writing the young missionary, Titus, Paul reminds him that the work of the ministry is oriented toward teaching. We know from other missives that preachers are to teach, equipping others also to be able to teach [see 2 TIMOTHY 2:2]. Ultimately, the growth of a congregation is directly proportional to the multiplication of the teaching ministry of the pulpit. Every member is expected to echo the instruction he or she has received.

Certainly, each of us is responsible to teach the lost of the grace of God revealed in Christ Jesus the Lord. We are each charged to encourage and comfort one another as members of the same Body, “teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in [our hearts to God]” [COLOSSIANS 3:16; cf. EPHESIANS 5:19]. These are general charges that are incumbent upon each member of the Body of Christ. However, beyond this, Christian men and women are appointed to the vital ministry of teaching their own children, a ministry that seems often neglected in this day late in the Age of Grace.

The focus of the message this day is yet another unique teaching ministry that is assigned exclusively to women. Should the women of a given congregation fail to fulfil this assignment, there is scant hope that the congregation will ever reach its full potential. It is fair to say that if this vital teaching ministry is neglected, that the future of that congregation is very much in doubt. If a ministry of the congregation is truly this important, then we should give careful attention to what is written, ensuring that we fulfil the mind of the Lord. Therefore, join me in exploring Paul’s instructions to Titus, missionary to Crete.

MODELLING THE FAITH — “Older women likewise are to be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good.” Few ladies wish to be thought of as “old women.” However, “older women” is a relative term, indicating women experienced in walking with the Lord. Though the term “older women” does apply to age, the experience drawn from a godly life is in view when the Apostle addresses “older women.” The older women are those ladies who have lived holy lives, faced challenges and overcome them, raised godly children and who therefore enjoy the respect of others. Their insight into practical matters of the Faith is valued because they have long walked with the Master.

These older women in the church do have influence, but it is not, as some people imagine, power to make things happen or power to control the church and move it as they wish. The influence of godly women serves to restrain evil and to promote the welfare of the congregation. On one occasion, Lynda and I were in discussions with an ethnic church concerning pastoral ministries. One of the questions asked was how I would handle the women of that community since they were known as “strong-willed.” I have found that “strong-wills” are not confined to one ethnic group or another, but it is a common problem among Christians.

Though it may appear tangential to the message, I do want to caution that strong-willed people—stubborn individuals—sound the death knell of a congregation when they are permitted to exert a recalcitrant attitude among the people of God. I have observed in multiple congregations headstrong women who thought they knew what needed to be done and pushed hard to get their way. Never once have I seen them bless God's work. Rather, I have watched them grow progressively bitter and ever more intractable in their opposition to the advance of the Gospel because the influence of new people diluted their own tenuous hold on power.

I must offset that sorrowful observation with the confession that I have been blessed in each congregation with godly women who sought the mind of the Lord and exerted righteous influence as they laboured to advance the cause of Christ. It is such women that merit our admiration and to whom we should look to provide a model for Christian women to emulate.

Paul instructs Titus to instruct older women of the need to be reverent in their behaviour, and he plainly describes what reverent behaviour looks like. He uses the term “likewise,” which of necessity refers back to what was written concerning older men. Paul urged older men to be “sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love and in steadfastness.” In short, the Apostle expects those who are of mature age in the congregation to act their age, providing examples of the believer, revealing maturity in their attitudes and in their actions. Older men and older women are to assume responsibility to model godliness for younger believers.

Paul writes that older women are to avoid being slanderers and to watch that they not be addicted to that which would otherwise control their ability to think or reason. I would suggest that Paul, guided by the Spirit, points to two areas of life in which women have a particular vulnerability. Perhaps it is necessary to state that acknowledging these general vulnerabilities is not ignoring the vulnerabilities that men display, but it is to state that women do have dispositions which can become detrimental to the advance of the Faith if not checked.

The first of these areas in which Paul cautions women is the area of slander or gossip. The word translated “slanderers” is the Greek term *diábolos*, which sounds suspiciously like diabolic. The term conveys the thought of being devilish, for it shares the root of the Greek term that is used for the devil. To slander is to be devilish. Slander is a weapon meant to destroy the character of another person. Though anyone can become a slanderer, Paul seems to convey the thought that women may be particularly prone to this devilish stratagem, no doubt in part because slander is such a powerful weapon for those who feel vulnerable.

Women are called the weaker sex, not because they are without defence, but because they are physically weaker. Consequently, rather than directly confronting those with whom they disagree, women tend to resort to the most powerful weapons in their arsenal, which generally revolve around their marvellous ability to communicate. Generally speaking women have superior communicative skills, and early in life young girls learn to use the power of the tongue to injure those with whom they take umbrage and to manipulate gullible young boys who are susceptible to such wiles. This is the basis for encouraging older Christian women to model speech that is pure and that builds others rather than tearing them down.

Just as older women in general are called to model godliness in speech, deacons wives are to be dignified and to avoid slander, modelling godliness for other women, being sober-minded and faithful in the conduct of their lives [see **1 TIMOTHY 3:11**]. I draw from this that such conduct represents a mark of maturity in the Faith. It says that the women who eschew slander as a response to unfairness or to people that have disappointed them reveal a character that honours the Master. All Christians must, therefore, “put off the old self with its practises.” The new self will have rejected “anger, wrath, malice [and] slander” [see **COLOSSIANS 3:8, 9**].

The other area of concern specifically addressed to older women is that they avoid being “slaves to excessive drinking” [see **NET BIBLE**]. It could easily have been a temptation, especially in that day, for women to succumb to addiction as an escape mechanism. Unable to leave the house without a husband’s permission, and especially in the homes of those who were wealthy where slaves did much of the household work, women had extensive blocks of time without responsibility. Boredom could easily lead to a search for amusement or diversion from the tedium of routine. Consequently, wine was perhaps the most readily accessible diversion.

Though alcohol and drugs can be, and often are, a temptation for some in this day, the principle Paul enunciates should be seen as a caution against any addictive behaviour. Addictions could include such otherwise innocuous activities as surfing the internet, watching daytime soap operas, or reading romance novels—all diversions that have been ascribed to women at various times. Each of these activities are in their own right morally neutral. However, when they become a necessary part of the daily routine they can lead to excessive idleness. The need to set aside excessive amounts of time for any of these activities is more a symptom than a sin. The sin under scrutiny in this instance is idleness, and especially moving away from reality in order to create a virtual world.

The principle that we should see in the apostolic instruction is the need to assume full responsibility over our own lives, rather than seeking escape from the reality of life. The principle that should be sought and fostered in the lives of all Christians—and in the lives of older women especially—is self-control. Whether life becomes harsh or tedious or demanding, we who are members of this Body must encourage one another to draw strength from the Lord Christ rather than seeking escape from confronting life as it comes rushing at us.

Godly women whose lives are worthy of emulating are women who show the strength of their character through living holy lives regardless of the circumstances in which they live. Such women deserve our commendation and respect, and they should be esteemed as those capable of teaching younger women godly values that will serve them well and that will honour the Lord Christ. The task assigned to women is neglected only at the cost of the lives of younger Christian women and at the expense of the future of the churches.

TRAINING IN THE FAITH — “Older women ... 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.” How much more productive and how much more godly it is for the entire Body when the older women teach the younger women what is good. This positive admonition is desperately needed in our day.

Young women face pressures that were not thought of even a few years ago. The feminist revolution has accomplished one thing for women—they are compelled to work because two paycheques are often necessary to run a household today. Consequently, young women can be turned off by repeated criticisms from older women because they go to work, have their children in day care, and share decision-making with their husbands. Younger women may well feel sad and even guilty for having to work and letting others care for their children; they need understanding and encouragement rather than criticism. Older women may not have a realistic concept of how much a mortgage, food, transportation and taxes take out of even two regular paycheques. And if a mother or a grandmother thinks that the family of a young woman making payments on two cars and a large screen TV is unwise or unnecessary, perhaps more prayer and loving help in learning about caring for a family will bring the young woman to new spiritual perspectives and values.

How much better to provide training in Christian values for young women! And who is better able to provide such training than older women who are themselves walking with the Lord. Specifically, older women are to teach “what is good.” God teaches that the good is to teach “young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands.” Such teaching has never been more necessary than in this day. Godly models are rare, which increases the urgency for providing such modelling.

Contemporary society teaches that self-fulfilment trumps being a wife or and mother. Self-fulfilment is empowered by no-fault divorce. No-fault divorce is but recognition that society has concluded that families should not be supported to stay together during rocky times, and so many (dare I say most) young women have bought into the lie that only if they have a career or have freedom to experiment with forbidden love will they ever be fulfilled.

In his dark description of conditions in the last days, the apostle speaks of a society “filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness [and] malice.” He describes people “full of envy, murder, strife, deceit [and] maliciousness” who are “gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless [and] ruthless” [**ROMANS 1:29-32**]. Those last two descriptions, speaking especially to women in a terminal society, could well be spoken of this day.

News accounts telling of abandoned children and brutalised infants appear with distressing frequency; I am not convinced that this is due solely to better reporting. The empirical evidence demonstrates that a significant percentage of the population *has* grown heartless and ruthless, and many others are too jaded to be overly concerned. The natural instinct for mothers to protect their children at any cost, though not rare, has certainly become relaxed in our day. Without models of biblical propriety, an increasing number of modern mothers are overly concerned about protecting the self-esteem of their children while failing to love them enough to instruct them in righteousness so they will be protected from themselves.

The Bible has surprisingly little to say about the specific training of girls to be godly women. In part, this is because of the natural modesty women possess. However, that same Word of god has plenty to say about the need for young men to be trained in righteousness. Again, this is likely due to the general tendency of men to be adventuresome, depending upon their strength to accomplish assigned tasks. Also, the Word of God assumes male leadership in the home, with men accepting responsibility to train their sons and to provide a model of manliness for their daughters. Children growing to adulthood in a home where husbands love their wives and lovingly train their children have an advantage in the world. However, children raised in a single parent home are disadvantaged, having no model for their own lives.

However, when a society is feminised—little boys being drugged to make them submissive and penalising them for acting rowdy like little boys, and when a significant number of children are raised in homes without the presence of fathers to model manliness, young men tend to grow into brutes. In an environment such as that, young women also lack a model of godly manliness, and thus grow to be ruthless and heartless, just as the Apostle warns. Moreover, if there is no intervention to reverse the trend, the condition is self-perpetuating.

Older women are charged to teach young women to love their husbands and children. Though loving her family should be the normal state for a woman, the natural disposition can be, and increasingly is, overridden through indoctrination by individuals whose own lives have already been spoiled through buying into the world’s lie. There is need for godly women to both model loving their husbands and their children, and there is need to mentor young women, training them to have the same love. This is much more than a family issue, it is a church issue.

It seems apparent that hostility to men not only exists in our world, but is encouraged. Inept and bungling dads are a staple in advertising; whereas super moms capable of almost any feat are standard fare in that same advertising world. In our present environment, fathers and husbands should not expect fair consideration of their plea should they be haled into court by angry wives and/or girlfriends. The explosion of single parent homes—the majority of which are mothers attempting to raise their children alone—has effectively taught an entire generation that men have solely a biological function and no moral or ethical role within the home. This is, of course, contrary to the teaching of the Word of God.

I am quick to acknowledge that in an earlier era men acting as tyrants were tolerated, though never approved among the faithful; but the pendulum has swung to an opposite extreme, and men often feel demeaned and maligned by a virulent secular feminism. Thus, marriages would be strengthened and wives will discover true happiness when they are trained to respect their husbands, just as men must be trained to love their wives as themselves [see **EPHESIANS 5:33**].

In our text, Paul also states that young women are to be taught self-control and purity. Older women are to be teachers, training young women through modelling these virtues. However, they are also to train them through encouraging them to exercise self-control and modesty. Now, I may get into trouble here, but it seems to me that young women have never been taught how to dress. They dress as they do in great measure because so many women of my generation are still trying to look like they are sixteen. There is nothing more grotesque than a fifty-year-old woman trying to look as though she were sixteen. Garish makeup, tight clothing, bare midriff and plunging necklines certainly do not qualify as modest.

It would be a good thing if the older women taught young women the wisdom in the admonition, “I desire ... that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control” [**1 TIMOTHY 2:9**]. Dressing like a common trollop is in no sense becoming, though it will attract young men’s attention. However, I can assure you that they will not be thinking Sunday School thoughts as they stare at the young woman dressed in that fashion. Moreover, only men with morally defective judgement would be prepared to take such a young critter home to meet his parents. You who are older women marked by a holy mien, accept as your great task the training of young women to be self-controlled and pure. I urge older women to model for young women modesty and godliness; teach them to adorn themselves “with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works” [**1 TIMOTHY 2:10**].

I want to take just a moment before addressing one final issue from the text. Increasingly, I have observed among the churches a trend in which the parents, especially parents of teenagers, insist that the church must do something. These thoroughly modern parents have permitted their teenagers to raise themselves, and when the children enter their teens, they are influenced by the world around them to want to prove their maturity through rejecting modesty and what is generally accepted as sensibility.

Knowing that their children are drinking or trying drugs, knowing that their children are perhaps experimenting with sex and in general rejecting their parents’ influence, the mothers and fathers cry out to the pastor to do something. In desperation, they begin to demand help, but they do not want to threaten the increasingly tenuous relationship that has developed with their offspring. So they accuse the church of failing their children. The charge is unfair, but it is spoken from a position of desperation. However, as a congregation we can circumvent the possibility, and perhaps save some young women from disaster through creating an aggressive mentoring program that draws on the experience of godly older women. The lives of young women is worthy of our finest efforts. We must try.

GODLY MOTHERS TRANSFORMING THE WORLD — “Older women ... are to teach ... that the word of God may not be reviled.” There is a general truth that needs to be recognised. All that Paul has said concerning women’s ministries is but a specific application of the command given in **VERSE ONE**, where Titus was commanded to “teach what accords with sound doctrine.” Members of the Faith Community are to encourage one another toward godliness and to live godly lives themselves so that “the Word of God may not be reviled.”

One of the grave concerns I have for this congregation—or any congregation—is that the members accept responsibility to live in such a way that they do not bring disgrace upon the cause of Christ. We have been so thoroughly indoctrinated in the ways of this world that we unconsciously espouse the mantra that how we live is nobody’s business. However, my life in the community—the decisions I make, the way I speak, the attitude I express, even the way I dress—is very much the concern of the congregation to which I belong.

My life reflects on the doctrines held by the congregation and on the cause of Christ. There are two levels of doctrinal expression. There is what is taught—the creeds professed by a congregation and which are routinely taught from the pulpit, and there is what is lived out in the lives of the membership. Ultimately, it matters very little what a church professes, for all that is witnessed is what is lived out before the eyes of the community in which the church is situated. Obviously, this same truth holds for individual Christians. You may profess to love Christ, but if He makes no difference in the way you live, your profession is meaningless. You may profess to love His church, but if you essentially have nothing to do with the congregation and if you are indifferent to the ministry God has assigned to you, what you say you believe means nothing.

Consequently, the attempt by many professing Christians to segregate life into compartments will always prove futile. The thought that we can separate our lives into a portion for God on Sunday while designating the remainder to pursue our own fallen interests is fallacious and foolish. The reason the world is so repulsed by hypocrisy among Christians is precisely because the people of this world recognise that unlike other religions, we Christians profess to be an enclave of heaven, and the world expects us to live as though we are different.

No one accuses Muslims of being hypocrites when they blow up innocent people, behead reporters or stone women who speak to a man other than their husband. No one accuses Hindus of being hypocrites when they burn missionaries alive or stone families with whom they disagree. However, professing Christians who attempt to segregate their lives into compartments labelled secular and sacred are rightly dismissed as hypocrites. Paul’s concern is that we must determine that we will so live that we do not disgrace the Name of Christ our Lord. While this is a general principle incumbent upon each member of a congregation, the focus of the teaching before us is that women must be trained to avoid bringing the Word of God into disrepute.

So, the Apostle insists that older women are to teach young women how to be godly women and mothers, and this training is to be done so as to remove a great barrier to successful evangelism. Christians have been left in the world to evangelise, to tell lost people of the love of God in Christ, of the provision of life in the Saviour, of the consequences of sin if atonement is rejected. Christians are not to simply “go to church,” they are to be the church.

I know that the message seems to be a polemic against parental failure; I acknowledge there is a component that addresses that concern. However, the greater purpose is to urge the congregation prayerfully to encourage the younger women to find a godly woman of more mature years to pattern their lives after. The purpose of the message is to encourage the older women to encourage young women to live godly lives according to the pattern of the Word.

It is ideal that a woman's mother should be the one modelling the godliness sought. However, every woman in this congregation is precious and deserves to have a model for patterning her life, whether her own mother provides that model or not. Part of that necessary patterning is observing how to be a godly mother, how to love her husband and her children, living a life that is self-controlled and pure, making her home an enclave of heaven so that her children will one day rise and call her blessed.

I pray that each one hearing this message has a vibrant relationship with the True and Living God. If somehow you have yet to receive the life He offers, please hear what I am about to say. God created you so that you could enjoy a vibrant, real relationship with Him. He sent His Son to take the punishment you deserve, which He did by giving His life on a Roman cross. However, the Good News of the Bible is that Jesus the Lord did not remain dead. We are informed by witnesses that saw Him, spoke with Him, dined with Him and touched Him that He really, truly came to life. These witnesses testified to the veracity of this amazing truth even at the cost of their lives, their fortunes and even the respect they may have previously enjoyed.

Now, the Word of God calls you to believe this truth, accepting this Living Jesus as Master over your own life. The Word of God says, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." That passage continues by citing the Prophet Joel who urges all mankind to seek the Saviour. He says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" [**ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13**].

My sincere prayer is that each of us does indeed know Christ Jesus the Lord. I pray that He will bless each woman with a life marked with a joyous walk in His love. May He raise up a generation of godly women who will be graciously effective in raising godly children. Amen.