

# **The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Woman of Grace: To Love Their Children: Choosing Nurturing Love In a Loveless World Titus 2:4c**

Nurturing love in a loveless world is our theme this morning.

On Christ's last night with His disciples, He said in John 13 that believers would be known by their love for each other. This type of love is supernatural, prompted by grace, empowered by the Spirit, and modeled by godly mature saints. Christ's church was built from the start with this powerful nurturing love.

Paul wrote Titus saying that God desires to see all mothers expressing to their children. But this love is not merely found in Titus 2:4, this nurturing love of closeness, friendship, and tender care is the very same love with which God built Christ's church from the very start.

When Paul described his discipleship method for encouraging believers to grow spiritually, he carefully used powerful nurturing terms. On our way to Titus 2 this morning, look with me at Paul's very first letter to a church, captured for us by inspiration, and placed in our Bibles by the Holy Spirit in the book we call First Thessalonians. Here:

## **God Describes the Nurturing Heart**

Remember, this is Paul's earliest letter and it reflects the plan that God gave Paul through the power of the Holy Spirit to deeply impact this pagan port city of the Roman Empire.

In chapter 2 Paul explains how these saints got so well nurtured and trained that their lives impacted the vast geographic area surrounding their city with the Gospel. The terms Paul uses should be very important to us, because they reflect the methods Paul used to reach a culture very similar to ours. This nurturing love should also be what we ask the Spirit of God to prompt in our hearts, lives, and ministries.

As we look at I Thessalonians 2, please stand with me and follow along as we read this entire chapter.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-20 (NKJV) For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. 2 But even after we had suffered before and were

spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. 3 For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. 4 But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so **we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.** 5 For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. 6 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. **7 But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.** 8 So, affectionately longing for you, we were well **pleased to impart to you** not only the gospel of God, but also **our own lives**, because **you had become dear to us.** 9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; **11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,** 12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. 13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, **because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it** not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. 14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, 16 forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost. 17 But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. 18 Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us. 19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? **Is it not even you** in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? 20 **For you are our glory and joy.**

Pray

Did you see Paul's pattern for nurturing love? He communicates six qualities of nurturing love for every believer, including the nurturing mothers we are going to learn about today.

## What is Nurturing Love?

1 Thessalonians 2:4 But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so **we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.**

[Point 1: Nurturing love communicates the truths of God's Word that we need to hear]

1 Thessalonians 2:7 **But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.**

[Point 2: Nurturing love is very tenderly directed towards individual needs]

1 Thessalonians 2:11 **as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,**

[Point 3: Nurturing love needs to be clearly communicated in many ways]

1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, **because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it** not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

[Point 4: Nurturing love involves encouraging individuals to listen and respond to God's Word]

1 Thessalonians 2:18 Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—**but Satan hindered us.**

[Point 5: Nurturing love persists even when facing great adversity and difficulties, because it is prompted by God]

1 Thessalonians 2:19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? **Is it not even you** in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? 20 **For you are our glory and joy.**

[Point 6: Nurturing love produces endless rewards in Heaven because deep investments are made in people—the only thing we can take with us to Heaven!]

The early church was built up and grown with this atmosphere of nurturing love.

## **Christ's Church was a Haven of Nurturing Love**

Through God's eyes, Paul looked upon the church as his family, the new believers as his children. He saw himself as the nurturing mother "feeding" them; and as the nurturing father "encouraging" them.

God has always wanted to gently care for Christ's church. Jesus Christ is portrayed as the Good Shepherd, God calls Himself our Heavenly Father, and the Spirit of God is

presented as the One who is charged to stay close to each of God's children as our Comforter, Guide, and Helper.

There is no greater place of joy, peace, and comfort than to go through life in the family of God.

That is why as we open to Titus 2 Paul explains that the younger women were to take up nurturing love as a life-long pursuit. Following the example of Christ, and the practices of Paul as they cared for the Church, younger women were to be taught, mentored, nurtured, and trained in how to have that same nurturing love for their own children.

Follow along as I read the context for this second quality God seeks in every younger woman:

Titus 2:1-5 (NKJV) But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: 2 that **the older men** be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; 3 **the older women** likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— 4 that they admonish **the young women** to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, **that the word of God may not be blasphemed.**

Pause for a moment and look back at the final phrase of verse 5, and allow the severity of those words to penetrate your soul.

The Spirit of God communicates the heart of our Creator and Master in this book called the Bible. In passages like this there is no wiggle room, no obscurity or confusion as to just what God may have wanted to communicate. Right here before us in these inspired words that make up Titus 2:1-5 are God's desires for us.

And right here at the end of v. 5 is the motivation: to NOT respond to God's desires is equal to BLASPHEMING the voice of God speaking to us.

None of us His children would ever want to directly go against God's wishes, so as we look at this passage, we should be saying yes to the Lord, as your servants we want to be:

## **Learning How to Offer This Nurturing Love**

God describes a godly mom's goal with her children in one word in the Greek text: **philoteknos**; and it means to be a lover of children, so mothers of grace love their children with **phileo** love that can be felt. That is a mother's special ministry in Christ's church!

Just the fact that these words were inspired by God to come to His saints means that this was not common, this was not easy, and this was not normal. This type of love just

doesn't "happen" because God wants it, it is a choice, it is a lesson to be learned<sup>1</sup>, and it is a factor that determines a believer's eternal reward in Heaven.

Where do we start? Godly mothers who surrender to the power of God's grace, make sure their loved ones feel their love<sup>2</sup>. To help them receive and be touched by your love, we can try to use those several key ingredients that we see in both Christ's and Paul's ministry. These small choices always help us to communicate affirmation and encouragement.

## **Nurturing Love Cultivates The Power of Biblical Touch**

First, look at what Jesus did in Mark 10:13-16, turn there with me and note the description of how Jesus blessed the children.

Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. 14 But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." 16 And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

When Jesus could have stood at a distance, he didn't. He gathered those children into His arms. Jesus was always touching those He ministered to. He could have healed them with just a word, but nine times here in Mark alone Jesus stops, reaches out His Hands, and touches those He served<sup>3</sup>. This is a strong message to us by way of His example. Jesus reached out to touch those He loved. So should we!

The act of touch is a key to communicating warmth and affirmation. It is even essential to physical health. Be generous with your hugs, embraces, and extending your hands to others. People desperately and deeply need the awesome power of human touches.

**Application number 1:** Nurturing love means loving others in a way they can feel by using the power of Biblical Touch—when we reach out and communicate Christ's love through placing our hands on them.

## **Nurturing Love Cultivates The Power of Biblical Affirmation**

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<sup>1</sup> From time to time it becomes so very hard to take care of children that a mom of any century in history no longer "feels" positive feelings towards her children. So how did God instruct Paul to prepare Christ's church for these great social challenges and family pressures? Again, Titus 2 has the solution. God says that the way that tired, burned out, and depressed mothers get relief is from the faithful army of Titus 2 grace-energized role models.

<sup>2</sup> Some of these ideas were adapted from ideas contained in *The Blessing* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986, Nashville) and *The Blessing Workbook* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, Nashville) by Gary Smalley and John Trent, Ph.D.

<sup>3</sup> Mark 1:31; 1:41; 5:41; 6:5; 7:33; 8:23; 9:27; 9:36, and 10:16.

Second, do you remember how Paul used tender and encouraging words to help his son in the faith Timothy? We should always remember that just giving hugs isn't enough, we need like Paul to say as many encouraging and uplifting words as possible.

One of the most beautiful testimonies to the power of encouragement (or affirmation) in the New Testament is in the life of the Apostle Paul. If you turn to I Timothy 1 listen as Paul explained to Timothy that he was:

- **'A true son'** (I Timothy 1:2); "To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord" (NKJV);
- **'An example to the flock'** (I Timothy 4:12) "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (NKJV);
- And that he **'had a gift'** (I Timothy 4:14) "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership" NKJV and needed to **'stir it up'** (II Timothy 1:6) "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (NKJV).
- He reminded him of his incredible spiritual heritage **'that from a child'** (II Timothy 3:15) "and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (NKJV).
- Paul was careful to not **'belittle Timothy for his weaknesses'** (1 Timothy 5:23) "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities" (NKJV), and **'his frequent tears'** (2 Timothy 1:4) "greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy" (NKJV).
- Rather, he told Timothy he had a **"treasure"** entrusted him (I Timothy 6:20) "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—(NKJV), and that he should never stop no matter what lay ahead because he was **'gifted'** and that God was **'going to use him and reward him'** (2 Timothy 4:8) "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing (NKJV).

So Paul loved Timothy with love he could feel. Paul "affirmed" Timothy, and used tender and encouraging words to help him as his son in the faith Timothy. These exhortations were tenderly given to a struggling man.

Just like Paul, use the power of Biblical Affirmation to nurture your children. Tell your children how you feel about them! Those who are left to fill in the blanks often feel

worthless and insecure. At best, only confusion can come from silence. Far too many of us are really not very good at verbally communicating encouragement.

**Application number 2:** Nurturing love means loving others in a way they can feel by using the power of Biblical Affirmation—when we prepare and use special words for them.

## **Nurturing Love Cultivates The Power of Biblical Praying**

Next, reaffirm your plan to stand by your loved one in prayer through the months and years ahead to help make your words of affirmation become a reality. Paul expressed this truth as he confessed that one of his greatest labors was remembering Timothy “night and day” in prayer (II Timothy 1:3).

Always remember those final words that rang in Christ's disciples ears from the “Great Commission”. For the rest of their life they heard Him say, “I am with YOU always!” I am walking through every day of your life with you in love, in concern, in partnership.

Jesus started His ministry with the Twelve by one simple plan in Mark 3:14, “and He ordained 12 that ***they should be with Him***”. Watch them, share their ups and downs; know where they are in their spiritual life, their school life, work life, home life. Find out who they are close to and who they are not close to—and why.

- **Take an interest in whatever seems to interest your children.** Get into his or her world so you can pray.
- **Be lovingly persistent in communicating with your children.** That is, keep trying to set up times when meaningful communication can occur, so you can pray.
- **Take the initiative in asking your children questions.** Have an endless learning time asking about what they think, what they feel, what they like or don't like—and why, so you can pray.
- **Listen to your children with full attention.** Let her see your eyes light up when they talk to you, then treasure what you hear so you can pray.

Godly mothers pray for their children, and let them know it. Start a life-long prayer list with specific areas that you have learned from them need prayer, and then PRAY. Ask for updates. Celebrate answers. Pray together.

If you are not praying for them each day, who is?

Regardless of their age, they need you to lift them up before the Lord in prayer each day. Think about their day. Think about their setting. Think about the people they will be with. Pray about these situations.

**Application number 3:** Nurturing love means loving others in a way they can feel by using the power of Biblical Prayer—making the commitment to walk through life with them.

## **Nurturing Love Should be our Goal**

God describes a godly mom's direction with her children in one word in the Greek text: ***philoteknos***; and it means that mothers of grace love their children with ***phileo*** love that can be felt.

Just the fact that these words were sent by God to challenge His saints means that this was not common, this was not easy, and this was not normal. This type of love just doesn't "happen" because God wants it, it is a choice, it is a lesson to be learned<sup>4</sup>, and it is a factor that determines a believer's eternal reward in Heaven.

The early church was built up and grown with this atmosphere of nurturing love.

- Point 1: Nurturing love communicates the truths of God's Word that we need to hear;
- Point 2: Nurturing love is very tenderly directed towards individual needs;
- Point 3: Nurturing love needs to be clearly communicated in many ways;
- Point 4: Nurturing love involves encouraging individuals to listen and respond to God's Word;
- Point 5: Nurturing love persists even when facing great adversity and difficulties, because it is prompted by God;
- Point 6: Nurturing love produces endless rewards in Heaven because deep investments are made in people—the only thing we can take with us to Heaven!

## **APPENDIX: Nurturing Love Cultivates The Power of Spiritual Assets**

A servant of God has their heart set on spiritual treasures and measures life by the acquisition of spiritual assets rather than merely physical assets. Do you keep track of your ***Spiritual Assets***? Often we know our house value, our retirement investment

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<sup>4</sup> From time to time it becomes so very hard to take care of children that a mom of any century in history no longer "feels" positive feelings towards her children. So how did God instruct Paul to prepare Christ's church for these great social challenges and family pressures? Again, Titus 2 has the solution. God says that the way that tired, burned out, and depressed mothers get relief is from the faithful army of Titus 2 grace-energized role models.



value, the worth of our collections and treasures—but do you keep an inventory of spiritual assets? What are some of our spiritual assets?

These are things like:

- Asking them **where they are reading in God's Word** so they remember when they grow up and leave home that you always cared how they were doing spiritually.
- Asking them each week **what they are finding in God's Word** that is helping them to make it through the day. And, actually remembering what they said the last time because you care. This is a spiritual treasure because it forges a strong bond in your hearts of a shared spiritual walk.
- Finding and learning scripture **memory verses that you share in common with your loved ones** are a spiritual treasure. Not hundreds or even dozens, but a handful that you all have learned and share in common. What a treasure to quote them around the living room when the power goes out, or an ice storm cancels church, or when you are traveling, to have this body of Scripture that you together as a couple and a family learned is a true spiritual treasure. Some of the more valuable passages are Psalm 23, the love chapter--I Corinthians 13, the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, and key verses on the tongue and faith in James.
- Collecting **testimonies of salvation** is a record of each person's greatest treasure, isn't it? The only thing that lasts forever from this world will be people and whatever we send up to Heaven before we leave. So, who are you taking to Heaven with you? Have you heard, understood, and savored the testimonies of your family? Can you tell your husband's or wife's testimony? How about your children? What an incredible treasure is our salvation. Take a spiritual inventory of the status of each soul around you in those you love.
- Recording and remembering those **spiritual milestones**, have you started on this spiritual asset yet? Do you record your loved ones salvation date, baptism date, when they started the habit of personal devotional quiet times, what they are doing in that QT? Have you started yet to celebrate each other's spiritual birthdays? Do you keep a record of, share and celebrate any souls led to Christ by you or by loved ones, and then uphold them by prayer? Who can your family say that you as a family are "taking to Heaven"?
- Finally, one of the great spiritual treasures is a **lifelong prayer journal**. Even if you've never started, it is never too late to start watching God at work through prayer. Any type of list will do, just date it, hold onto it, and be specific enough in your requests—and there you have it—an actual record of the God of Heaven moving in and through your life by prayer. A list of family needs, specific challenges, hurdles, obstacles, great goals, and so on are all prayed over. As well the verses for Christ's formation in the lives of those you love are always such a tool. Just a sheet of paper, dated, written out and prayed over faithfully until it

wears out and then a new one started will harvest great spiritual gains and treasures.