

MARY - LOVING GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART

Dianne Lorang in Keep the Fire Glowing¹, paraphrased this essential ingredient of mothering in the form of I Corinthians 13:

"If I talk to my children about what is right and what is wrong, but have not love, I am like a ringing doorbell or pots banging in the kitchen. And though I know what stages they will go through, and understand their growing pains, and can answer all their questions about life, and believe myself to be a devoted mother, but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give up the fulfillment of a career to make my children's lives better, and stay up all night sewing costumes or baking cookies on short notice, but grumble about lack of sleep, I have not love and accomplish nothing.

A loving mother is patient with her children's immaturity and kind even when they are not; a loving mother is not jealous of their youth nor does she hold it over their heads whenever she has sacrificed for them. A loving mother does not push her children into doing things her way. She is not irritable, when the chicken pox have kept her confined with three whining children for two weeks, and does not resent the child who brought the affliction home in the first place.

A loving mother is not relieved when her disagreeable child finally disobeys her directly and she can punish him, but rather rejoices with him when he is being more cooperative. A loving mother bears much of the responsibility for her children; she believes in them; she hopes

¹ By Williams, Williams and Jenkins, Revell, 1986, pp. 152-53.

in each one's individual ability to stand out as a light in a dark world; she endures every backache and heartache to accomplish that.

A loving mother never really dies. As for homebaked bread, it will be consumed and forgotten; as for spotless floors, they will soon gather dust and heelmarks. And as for children, well, right now toys, friends, and food are all-important to them. But when they grow up it will have been how their mother loved them that will determine how they love others. In that way she will live on.

So care, training, and a loving mother reside in a home, these three, but the greatest of these is a loving mother."

This morning may I introduce you (or reintroduce you) to a loving mother? Above all else Mary loved God. MARY, the mother of James and Jesus! Who is presented as the most honored woman in the Bible? Say it with me - MARY
Who was chosen out of all the women in the whole world to raise God's Son? MARY
Who is the greatest living, breathing example of Proverbs 31 in ordinary everyday life? MARY
Without exception who is probably the most beloved and best known woman in the world? MARY
(and that is probably the most times her name has ever been said aloud in most protestant churches!)

- I. MARY LISTENED TO GOD. (Luke 1:26-28) She joined so many others Adam and Eve in the Garden, Noah in the Pre-Flood world, Abram in Ur, Saul on the road to Damascus . . . God is in the people seeking business.
- II. MARY HUMBLED HERSELF BEFORE GOD SAID YES TO GOD'S GRACE. (Luke 1:29 Who me?) No airs, no pride, just a humble troubled heart that anyone would even say such a thing. She knew her own heart, certainly God would to! She was Saved by God. (Luke 1:30 lit. 'discovered grace of God ') Mary joined the countless multitude who are heirs of life eternal by God's grace. Marvelous grace of our loving Lord grace that exceeds our sin and our shame, yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured there where the blood of the Lamb was shed. Her study of the Word led her to the open arms of "God my Savior".
- III. MARY SURRENDERED TO GOD'S WILL (Luke 1:31-33) To produce within her body tiny hands that would some day touch lepers with a healing touch, to form a mouth within her womb that would speak the very Word of God, to feel the kick of feet that would walk the roads of Israel and spread the Gospel. What an incredible ministry opportunity.

- But wait, not to lessen her calling, but isn't that the opportunity all moms have?
 - To teach those tiny little ones that the greatest joy in all the world is to be touched by Jesus and be healed from the dreaded leprosy of sin? And to use their mouth share the power of the gospel with any who will listen. Can't we all do that and share in Mary's great opportunity?
 - And as a mother we can start their feet toward serving the Lord in many ways? Yes, what an opportunity we share. That is why Paul said in I Timothy 2 that women equal (are saved from second rate ministry) the men in church teaching and leading ministry - mothers bear and raise the teachers and leaders!
- IV. MARY EXPERIENCED GOD (Luke 1:34-37) She wouldn't even consider anything immoral. Instead she was surrounded by the Shekinah as God the Son entered her womb. God doing the impossible is what our life for Him is all about.
- V. MARY SERVED GOD JOYFULLY (Luke 1:38-45) She was a Slave of God. Luke 1:38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. (NIV) Wow, what a submissive and godly attitude. I'll say yes Lord yes to your will and to your way! All I am all I have all I'll ever be . . . And off she goes to be a blessing, starting with her cousin who hadn't told her the big news yet!
- VI. MARY IMMERSERD HERSELF IN THE SCRIPTURES. (Luke 1:46-55) She Sought God. Look at Have you paused to ask yourself how she did it? For starters, chew on this - In a world where Mary lived every drop of water was carried home by women from springs or wells in clay pots. Every ounce of flour was ground with a stone mill. Every bread loaf was baked in an oven with a wood fire burning to heat it. All dishes were washed (remember that well, the pot, the walk . . .) So time was at a premium, what's new right? But also, women were not at a premium. Jesus was the first to elevate women to their proper place. In Mary's time they were close to being furniture. So her knowledge of the Scriptures must have come from either her dad who Luke tells us was named Heli (Luke 3:23 traces Mary back to Adam to show Jesus was Savior of the world. Matthew 1 traces Joseph back to Abraham to show Jesus was the Messiah of the Jews.) Maybe Heli encouraged his daughter by exposing her deeply to the Scriptures. What a wonderful pursuit for any dad. Whatever the means Mary SOUGHT GOD!
- A. Mary was a woman about whom all we know in a practical way is that she learned her manners from the Word of God. Sounds like a good idea. If we were to look over her shoulder as she read from the scrolls and listened to God's truth we might learn what made her tick! One thing we can be sure of, as a relative of

David and Solomon, she would have read God's Word they were inspired to write. Look with me at Proverbs 14:1 The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish pulls it down with her hands. (NKJV)

- B. What a contrast. The wise woman is a builder of a godly home. She is a model of godly conduct. The foolish woman is a destroyer. That is what the words "tear down" mean. She destroys her home, her family and eventually her own life. Word by word, person by person, her evil stifles, chokes and eventually destroys people and relationships. What is her outcome? Look back at Proverbs 11:29 He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind, And the fool [will be] servant to the wise of heart. (NKJV).
- C. There is a classic American Tale², Gone with the Wind that so vividly portrays this idea. The movie is based on Margaret Mitchell's novel about a slice of Southern Living in the strife torn Civil War Era. It was a life nearly oblivious to the world around it. It was a vividly selfish, indulgent life. The central character is well known to us - the enticing southern belle, Scarlet O'Hara. A cunning and crafty woman who knew what she wanted and always tried to get it. Her self-centeredness is in stark contrast to the servant hearted Melanie. So Solomon, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, contrasts the selfish and indulgent Foolish woman to the sweet and selfless Wise woman.
- D. How did Mary cultivate godliness? First Mary would have applied herself to avoid the portrait of the Foolish Woman in Proverbs:
 - 1. Mary had learned to avoid being IMMODEST and alluring in her dress. Proverbs 7:10 Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. (NIV). Her clothing points to her not to her Father in Heaven and His holiness.
 - 2. Mary had learned to avoid any mocking at sin not hating and avoiding it. Proverbs 7:13-14 She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: 14 "I have fellowship offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows. (NIV). There is no fear of God, the future consequence or the present destructiveness of her actions.

VII. MARY NEVER STOPPED GROWING SPIRITUALLY. She was Sensitive to God. (Luke 2:19) But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. (NIV). Where did Luke get all this material he recorded in his two volume work on the first century event that changed everything? Yes, some of it came right out of the air from heaven. The

² Ideas found in Swindoll, You and Your Child, p. 90.

Holy Spirit just told him what to say (inspiration). But the rest came from hard work, interviewing the witnesses. Yes, every word of God's Word is inspired (inerrant, infallible, pure and divine) but each one came from somewhere. I think these words were from Mary after a long time of pondering (lit. 'to put together') all that God had done.

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