



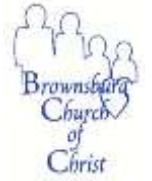
Don't Mother in Vain

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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AM Assembly



Introduction:

A man came home from work to find an absolute mess in the yard. Toys were strewn everywhere, shoes and socks were in the middle of the yard. A pile of ants was feasting on a half-eaten sandwich on the front steps of the porch. When he walked inside, he heard the TV blaring and children arguing. He didn't smell any dinner on the stove, so he stepped over toys and strewn clothes to the kitchen. The fridge door was open. The milk carton was tipped over and dripping on the floor. Bread was laid out on the table and the rest of the unused sandwich fixings were there as well. As he walked through the family room, he saw a broken lamp and a spilled coke (soda or pop for the Yankees among us). When he found the children, he discovered why there were dirty handprints all over the walls. They were filthy. They looked like they had been making mudpies and then stuck their faces in them. Their clothes were torn and dirty. Their faces were dirty and tear-streaked. He could hardly keep their muddied hands off his nice suit as they ran up to him. He finally made it to his bedroom and found his wife with headphones in and a book in her hand, sitting up in her bed reading in her pajamas. "What on earth happened here today," he exclaimed. His wife, the mother of his children, calmly turned the page of her book and said, "You know how every day you come home from work and ask me what I did with myself all day?" "Yes," he said. "Well, today, I didn't do it."

Thank you, mothers. Your work is often overlooked, but indispensable. Without mothers, we couldn't survive well. You work hard and the hardest job you do is for no pay. Your husbands often don't understand what you deal with, and your children rarely appreciate what you do for them. But you keep doing it day in and day out. Even when the rest of the family is on vacation from their jobs, you're still mothering. Thank you.

But for all these thanks and proper kudos and "atta girls," I want to offer a warning. It is the warning of **Psalm 127:1-2**. It is the warning that says for all you do, you may be spinning your wheels and working in vain. You may be the envy of other mothers, working hard and keeping your house spic and span, having your kids involved in everything under the sun, keeping their schedules running smooth, and their bodies healthfully fed, but if you miss the warning of **Psalm 127**, all you are doing is useless. Notice what the passage says: "Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep" (ESV). Mothers, here is the point. You are working hard, and that is great, but are you doing the one thing that makes all your other work useful? Are you letting God be involved? Of course you say, "I'm at church, aren't I?" But I'm not asking do you go to church, I'm asking do you make God part of your family? Do you make God part of your mothering? If not, you're mothering in vain. Don't do that. What keys are implied in this passage to make your mothering useful and effective.

Discussion:

I. Seek God first.

- A. A few weeks ago, I showed up at the office at 7 AM on a Saturday to meet with someone. To my surprise, Violet McDaniel was here. I said, "Wow, you're here early today." She said something like, "I've got too much to do. Had to get here early to get started." I said, "I understand that." To which she replied, "No you don't. You're not a wife." What could I say to that? Nothing. That's what.
- B. The old adage says it well: "A man may work from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done." Many mothers cook, clean, chauffeur, do the laundry, press the clothes, act as mediator between the kids, train the children to take care of themselves, bandage hurts, stop arguments, counsel teens, and on the list goes. Let's face it, it is easy to get caught up in the day to day grind and find that weeks have gone by without connecting to God. You are working hard and even doing good things, but you are spinning your wheels.
- C. Please remember that you are not the one who makes your work effective. God is. If you are forgetting Him, you can be exceeding all your fellow mothers in work and effort, but not doing anything worthwhile. It is vain for you to do all of this work if God isn't with you.
- D. **Matthew 6:33** is talking to mothers as well when it directs you to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness. Let's face it, as a mother, you have a lot of things to pursue. Lay the proper foundation to make all those other pursuits worth something. What good is it if you are the most active president of the PTA, the home room Mom of everyone's envy, the team Mom of each of your kids' sports teams if your soul is withering on

the vine? What good is it if your children get first chair, first string, and first place if God loses His place? What good is it if you are able to get your kids put in designer clothes, the latest smartphone, and the safest car if your spirit is shriveling because you've lost sight of God? All those other things may seem to provide some kind of meaning, but they won't last. Your kids graduate from school. The sports season ends. The last orchestra concert concludes and the curtain falls. And then the kids leave and you are there with yourself wondering what life is about. It is about God and if you haven't sought Him first, you'll be last.

- E. Make time for Him. Spend time in His Word, letting it encourage you and strengthen you. Spend time in prayer, casting your cares on Him, sharing your dreams with Him, confessing your sins to Him. I know if you are like most, your plate is full. Then the preacher comes along and says, "Here, have another item to add to your schedule." But the point of **Psalm 127:1-2** is none of the rest of that does any good if you aren't putting God first in your mothering. But when God is first in your life, He actually blesses you in your sleep. Sure, you still have to work hard, but success isn't hinging on your hard work, but on God on whom you are relying. And when God is working on your behalf, you can rest sometime and He keeps working for you.

II. Ask God to be involved.

- A. Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. How do you get God to labor on your home? The first key is to ask. In the midst of your personal devotion and relationship with God, make sure you are asking on behalf of your family. Ask Him to be involved in the building and the protection.
- B. Spend time praying for your own mothering. What are the weaknesses you have? Where are you falling short? Bring that to God. What victories have you had? Thank God. Spend time praying for your husband, the father of your children. Like you, he struggles to fulfill his role and needs God's strength to pull it off. Pray for him. Spend time for the children you are mothering. I know you are desperately trying to figure out what to say to them, how to act toward them to protect them from the mistakes you have made, to protect them from others, to protect them from themselves. I know you are desperately trying to figure out how to fix their weaknesses for them and how to make them overcome their struggles. But you really don't have that power. Only God does. So ask Him.
- C. As you pray, remember **James 4:3**. Selfish praying doesn't help. "God, please be with these kids that they'll finally get it, keep my house clean, appreciate all that I'm doing, and show me some respect." Your kids may need to learn things in these areas, but who are you really praying for in that? Yourself. Let me share with you the challenging prayer you should utter. "Dear Lord, please provide my children the mother they need." And in those moments when you are at your wit's end, ready to strangle one of them because they aren't measuring up to some standard you have set, here's a challenging prayer you can offer: "Dear Lord, help me find in your grace for me whatever it is I'm looking for by trying to have perfect children."
- D. And in all of this, remember **Ephesians 3:20**. God is able to do far more abundantly than all you ask or think. Do you know what that means? It means you should ask and think BIG!!! When God is building the home, the power flowing through it will amaze even you.

III. Make God's goals for your children your goals for your children.

- A. Here is the wrench in the clockworks. I imagine for mothers it is a lot like for fathers. We all believe in God. We all want to serve Him. We all want to trust Him. The problem is we just aren't sure that He is working toward the same goal that we are. Let's face it. What matters most in our world and culture? Economic production. Most of us want our children to grow up and be rich. We want to change our family tree so that our children will never have to worry about money. And so we pressure them in school, we overload them, we lecture them, we run ourselves ragged trying to give them every opportunity, we put ourselves in the poor house providing for their future.
- B. But what happens if we spend all our time constructing a ladder of success for our children and pushing them up that ladder if they get to the top and find that it is leaning against the wrong wall? What good will it do you and your children if you spend time in personal devotion, asking God to build your home and your children, if you then go about actively working against Him by pushing them toward the goals that do not matter to God. Don't misunderstand. God's goal for your children is not that they be financially destitute. But understand this, God's goal for your children is not that they be independently wealthy. God's goals for your children aren't about their financial state at all. His goal is that they glorify Him (see **I Peter 2:4-5, 9**). That, mothers, is what you need to be building and protecting. That is what you need to be inviting God to be part of. If your children grow to glorify God, He can decide whether your particular child can best glorify Him as the poor worker in some foreign field or as the wealthy benefactor who makes such trips possible. God can decide whether your child will most glorify Him among the down and out or among the up and coming.

- C. There is nothing wrong with educating your children to be economically productive in society. There is nothing wrong with training your children in money management. In fact, through these things they may bring glory to God. Make sure, however, that the kingdom is kept first as we read in **Matthew 6:33** earlier. Help them understand that while we can be worried and bothered by so many things, only one thing is necessary (cf. **Luke 10:38-42**) and that is knowing Jesus (cf. **Philippians 3:8-11**). Have you read the story of Lazarus and the rich man in **Luke 16:19-31**? I've said it before and I'll say it again: Mothers, I know it would be exceedingly painful to witness your children being Lazarus in this life. But the joy of the next will outweigh that pain. And understand that the pain of knowing your children will be the rich man in the next life will outweigh the joy of seeing them as the rich man in this one.
- D. Don't get me wrong. Your children will make their own choices. You can raise them right and they go wrong. You can raise them wrong and they go right. But I've counseled people in marriage trouble, financial trouble, job trouble, sin trouble, in sickness and sorrow, but I've never seen pain in anyone's eyes like the pain of someone who knows their children are lost. And that pain is miniscule compared to the pain in the eyes of the parents who know their children are lost and know that the children are just following the course the parents paved for them. Mothers, I have no desire to send you away feeling guilty today. I would simply spare you this pain as much as I can. The world's path is easily measured and can force your attention to it. But it ends in pain. If you want God building and watching your home and your children, make sure you are pursuing God's goals with them.

IV. Don't helicopter.

- A. When I was in Toastmasters, Elizabeth Pace, the author of The X and Y of Buy was in my club. Her speeches almost always had to do with social and psychological issues especially as related to gender differences. I remember in one of her speeches she related some of her research about gender differences in regard to college. As she gave that speech she shared that one of her friends was an admissions counselor for a college. She asked what was the biggest problem admissions counselors had to deal with these days as compared to years gone by? Was the biggest problem students that weren't prepared academically? Was the biggest problem students who couldn't afford the classes? Was the biggest problem students who weren't sure what they wanted to do with their lives and education? Nope. The biggest problem was students whom our society says are full grown adults who can supposedly vote for local and national leaders bringing their moms to their counseling sessions.
- B. In like manner, our very own Ed Major recently told me about a co-worker who attended a seminar about intergenerational differences in the work force. As the older generation retires and the younger generation replaces them, how do companies need to navigate the differing worldviews and approaches of these new workers? There were all kinds of differences, but do you know the most disturbing? The most disturbing was the number of these new workers who were reprimanded on the job and the mothers call the boss to deal with it. I'm not talking about teens working at McDonalds, but adults working at places like Allison.
- C. We call this helicopter parenting because the mother hovers around the child (even adult child) trying to fix all their problems and smooth every path for them. But **Psalms 127:1-2** demonstrates this is unnecessary, Mothers. How, you ask? Because **Psalms 127:1-2** asks mothers and fathers to realize that the greatest power in their child's life is God. God gives to His beloved sleep, or as some translations say God gives to His beloved in his sleep. The point is that when God is on our side we realize everything doesn't depend on us. God is there and God is working on our children.
- D. Please do not misunderstand. I'm not saying be a reckless mother allowing your children to inspect the lines in the middle of the street saying that if God is going to protect them He will. That violates the principle Jesus expounds in **Matthew 4:7** that we not put the Lord to the test. Providing healthy boundaries for your children as they grow is not a violation of **Psalms 127:1-2**. Remember, however, that your job is not live your child's life for them. Your job is to train your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to bring glory to Him, and then turn them loose in the world to live based on the training as they rely on and glorify God. Helicopter parenting denies this principle of **Psalms 127:1-2**, acting like the mother (or father) is the greatest power of protection and edification in the child's life. We are not. That is God. He has certainly put us here to train up our children, but at some point we have to turn them over to God and let God do His disciplining and training, trusting Him to do the right thing.

Conclusion:

Psalms 127:1-2 provides a strong warning and some great challenges. But I don't want you to walk out of here overwhelmed with guilt or shame. If you've been violating these warnings, I encourage you to repent and seek God's

forgiveness. While we highlight the warnings because, let's make sure we recognize the promise, the comfort. God gives to His beloved sleep, or as some translations say, God gives to His beloved in His sleep. When you bring God into your mothering, it is not in vain. When you bring God into your family, it is not in vain. You can't be everywhere all at once, but God can. You can't stay awake all the time, but God can. You don't know what is necessary in every situation, but God does. You can't see into tomorrow, but God can. When you bring God into your mothering, you are inviting the supreme power of the universe to work with you and even for you. When you can't be there, He will work for you. When you can't stay awake, He will work for you. No, this doesn't mean everything will work out exactly the way you want it to. No, it doesn't mean your children will never suffer harm. But it does mean that in their lives, God will only allow what is best for them to help them accomplish the goal of bringing the most glory to God. They may reject it, but if they reject God, they would reject you too. Take comfort that God is working on your family and will do what is right. You can let yourself sleep sometime because God is working for you. Be comforted by that. When you invite God to be part of the family, your mothering is not in vain.