

The Ideal Mother

When we use the word “ideal,” many may feel left out, because few would ever categorize themselves as the ideal of anything. In the first definition of “ideal” the meaning is given: satisfying one’s conception of what is perfect. The more acceptable definition is: best possible. Most of us would never consider ourselves the perfect anything, but we would like to be our best. God has blessed me to be the pastor of moms, dads, kids, singles and seniors. Overall, I believe I pastor the best moms in the world. Perhaps it is easy to say this since I pastor my mother, mother-in-law and the mother of my children. You may be saying, “You’d better be saying that, Pastor Pope.” In all seriousness, I really believe it to be true; I pastor a group of ideal mothers. I can collectively say about the mothers of Christchurch what Solomon said about the virtuous woman, “*Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all*” (Proverbs 31:29).

I want to talk about three qualities of an ideal mother.

1. An ideal mother laughs.

The Bible says, “*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones*” (Proverbs 17:22). The Lord knows we all need a good sense of humor. There are so many mothers in our church I could use as an example of this quality, but I would like to give you one whom I have pastored for nearly as long as I have lived in Houston and that is Myrtle (Grandma) White. As a young pastor, I had a part in one of her loved one’s funerals. As the family was leaving the gravesite, she caught wind that it was my birthday and gathered all of her kids around her and came to our car and before we drove away she led her kids in singing, “Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you; you look like a monkey and smell like one too!” And when finished, Grandma White’s was the biggest laugh of all. Now the remarkable thing is that this was at the time of the passing of a loved one, yet through the tears, through the miss, there was this willingness to look on the lighter side. Myrtle White has never changed. This past week I visited her in the hospital. As I inquired what was going on, she explained, “Well, I knew something was wrong when I got this tremendous headache.” I inquired, “You don’t normally get headaches?” She quickly answered with a coy smile, “Never, I don’t get headaches; I give them!” Then we both burst into laughter. I went into the hospital to be a blessing to one of my members, and instead she gave me the medicine of laughter.

Moms, don’t forget to look on the bright side! Seize the opportunity to laugh with your family. My Grandmother Pope used to draw her own comic character and named her, “Granny Creeps.” She would show us her illustrations and we would laugh together. My Grandmother Edwards reared thirteen children, but she never one day experienced the “empty nest.” My Aunt Ruby was a special needs child which required daily watch-care. Even on her death-bed, my grandmother planned out how Ruby was going to be taken care of, and although

Ruby out-lived Grandma by several years, she was well cared for and her every need was met. I loved spending time with my grandmother. Through all her veil of tears, she never lost her infectious sense of humor. In my memory I see her sparkling eyes, I hear her sweet laugh and even as I write these words, I am smiling.

2. An ideal mother learns.

I am amazed at how many of our moms are formally educated. I am in awe of some our ladies like Carrie Ray who, the same year her daughters graduate from college, receives her bachelor's degree as well! I am in awe of Cindy Briner, who years after receiving her bachelor's went on for her Master's degree. A stellar example is Vinette Harris who, with three young boys, one still in diapers, experienced the great sorrow of the sudden death of her husband (a fine Christian man). Yet through the setbacks went on to receive her PHD. Dr. Harris never gave up!

Most all the ladies in our church are vociferous readers. More than once I have quoted from a book and Cindy Messick has mentioned, "I enjoyed that book as well." I find myself having to work a little harder because my wife reads after the Victorian preachers that I dearly love, like F. B. Meyer and Andrew Murray. More than once Barbara has quoted something she has read and I have thought, I read his works and I didn't read that statement. I am thankful for mothers like Heather Transeu, who although has enjoyed the teaching of Kay Arthur has become a Bible teacher of excellence in her own right.

An ideal mother is a learning mother. Many of our mothers want to learn because they want the very best for their kids. I marvel at our home schooling mothers who will go above and beyond to master a subject, just so her kids can learn from her what she has learned first. One of the best examples of this is the mother of a young man by the name of George. George was dyslexic and could not read or write until he was twelve years old. His grandfather was a famous military man during the Civil War and his father was a brilliant lawyer. As far as role models, George had a lot to live up to. George's mother did not want him to give up on life or sense that the strikes against him meant that he was destined to "strike-out." His mom read to this young man the stories of heroes. She read to him of Alexander the Great, Scipio, Cromwell, Jackson and Lee. At twelve he began to read and then write. He mastered these skills fairly well, for he went on to become an outstanding student at the United States Military Academy at West Point. George S. Patton went down in history as one of the greatest field commanders in the entire history of the United States. Old "Blood and Guts" as he was called, became a great man because he had a mother who read to him. By the way, his spinster aunt did a great deal of reading to him as well. My most influential teachers throughout my school years were always women. Mrs. Phillips, my tenth grade World History teacher made the strongest impression on me. May we ever be mindful that we are to "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (II Timothy 2:15).

3. An ideal mother loves.

You knew I would have to include this virtue. I Corinthians 13:8 says, “*Charity (love) never faileth....*” A mother’s love is inexhaustible. Recently I have encouraged our parents to write down prayer requests on index cards, to help me pray for their families. I have been deeply touched by the personal prayers of mothers for their children. It would not be right to disclose the names of these requests, but allow me to share with you what one mother requested. I was asked, “Please pray that my kids would not only believe in God, but believe God.” What a great prayer to pray! Years ago, I was given a quote, “God could not be everywhere, and that’s why He gave us mothers.” Doesn’t that sound sweet? It may sound sweet, but it is wrong. God is everywhere, “*Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there . If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me*” (Psalm 139: 7-9). Here’s the truth of the matter. Moms cannot be everywhere, but God can be and this God demands to be loved. The greatest thing a loving mother can do is to teach her children to love God. I love what more than one mother wrote on the index prayer card: “Pray for (name of child) that (he or she) will be saved; they are close!” I think God gives Christian mothers the sixth sense in a lot of areas, but especially in spiritual matters. No one knows the heart of the child like a Christian mom.

As our kids grow, we want to instill within our children loyalty to our home turf and ourselves. Nothing is wrong with that, but remember, it is far more important for that child to love the Lord and not turn back from a dedicated walk with Him, than for that child to come home for the holidays. A mother who loves her children will teach them to love God and give Him first place. “*...In all things he might have the preeminence*” (Colossians 1:18).

-Pastor Pope-