

A GOOD ROLE MODEL FOR MOTHERS

Today we celebrate Mothers' Day. What is your best memory of your mom? What makes a good mother? A recent article found on Yahoo about Mothers suggested that America is not the best place for mothers to live. This report on the *Save the Children's* "Mothers Index" pointed to our high maternal mortality rate as well as the high rate of children who die before the age of five as two reasons for our low rating. A third reason is that among industrial nations, the U.S. is the 7th lowest for the percentage of children in preschool (61%). Another area where American mothers scored low is in the area of maternity leave. Of any wealthy nation, America mothers have the least generous leave in both terms of time off and loss of income. While it was an interesting article and shows that we need to rethink how we can better support and protect our mothers, it does not answer the question, "What makes a good mother?"

Is it age, income, or educational level? Is the number of after school activities a mother drives her children to, or the quantity of latest electronic gadgets one buys her offspring qualify her as a good mother? What makes a good mother?

There are a number of good role models in our congregation, I am sure. There are many moms who not only love their children, but provide a love-filled, caring, and challenging home for them. If you are really interested in what makes a good mother, God's Word provides a number of role models. Today I call your attention to Elizabeth, the wife of the priest Zachariah and the mother of John the Baptist. She is A GOOD ROLE MODEL FOR MOTHERS.

What is it about Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist that makes her a good role model? First, Elizabeth showed tremendous confidence in God. She expressed an unbelievable trust in God throughout her faith life. Dr. Luke wrote in the first chapter of his Gospel about her strong spiritual character. (Luke 1:5-6) For years she was unable to conceive a child. In the ancient Middle East a woman in a barren condition was considered cursed. Other women would ridicule them and whisper about them behind their backs. It was a difficult challenge for childless women. But Elizabeth did not complain or feel rejected by God. She did not conclude that God does not love her, or that if God would not give her children she would reject God.

Rather she remained faithful to God, praising and walking with God throughout her life.

No matter how hard it may be to be a woman and a mother, like Elizabeth, mothers can trust God, walk with God, and believe God's promises. Mothers today face overwhelming challenges. The majority of mothers work outside the home. This means not only do they daily face the pressures of work and the responsibilities of running a home, but they also must help their children deal with peer pressure, prepare them to face the temptations of our sex crazy culture, and cope with the availability of drugs. And it's even harder for single moms. God bless single moms, too! Like it or not, our children live in a world today where pornography is a mouse click away, cell phones are considered a necessity, and texting and sexting are the new ways to communicate. Our children live in a culture with changing sexual mores and behavioral values. (Sometimes change is not good!) Honesty is becoming a lost virtue. Our culture encourages kids to pressure parents with the argument that "if you love me you'll let me do what I want." Where can they find the strength to discern the God's pleasing way to live from the pleasure appealing enticements of temptation? It comes by being so convinced that God's Word is truth that moms live the Christian faith and reflect the true Christian lifestyle yourself. And if you do, moms, you will be a most positive influence on your children.

The second reason Elizabeth is a good role model is that when God finally blessed her with a child she understood her child was a gift from God. And Elizabeth treasured her gift. She knew and accepted the responsibility that comes with being a mother.

Yes, it is rewarding being a mother, but there are challenges, sacrifices, and sometimes even tears that come with motherhood. But no matter what the future holds, a good mother sees her child as a treasure from God. Mothers today need to understand the importance of being clean in terms of drugs and alcohol. No one wants her child to become an addict from conception. Expecting moms strive to be drug clean, eat right, exercise, and drink responsibly. Treasuring your child you will monitor what music he/she listens to or the program he watches on TV; the Websites he visits; and the people he hangs around with or dates. When your child is born you will be prepared to treasure your child, protecting, guarding, and preparing your child for life. You know that the mothers of wild animals do that for their young. Shouldn't we as the most intelligent creatures on earth do the same?

Third, Elizabeth took spiritual responsibility for her child. She went to the temple regularly to hear the Word of God. She strived to live it. She heard the promises of the Messiah and rejoiced in learning of the work he would do, the blessings he would bring, and the new life he offers to all believers. God promises in Romans 10:13, “...**faith comes by hearing the Gospel.**” Whenever one hears the Gospel the Spirit works faith in that person’s heart. As an expecting mother, she took her unborn son with her. He too, although still in the womb, could hear. He too heard the words of the priests concerning the coming Messiah. He heard and the Spirit created faith. When Mary came and told Elizabeth that she too was pregnant, and the child she was carrying would be the Messiah, the Savior of the world John leaped for joy. John heard and believed because his mother exposed him to the Gospel.

Like Elizabeth, mothers need to be growing spiritually. I encourage all our mothers to gather to hear the Word of God, as you are today. Believe the Word. Let the Word lead you to repentance; let the Word nurture your faith. Bring your children to church. Your being in church says something very powerful to your children. No matter what your child’s age, encourage your child to worship, to gladly hear and learn God’ Word. It will bring both temporal and eternal blessings to them.

The fourth reason Elizabeth is a good role model is that she had the support of her husband, Zachariah. He supported her when she was challenged in the temple at their son’s circumcision. When John was named, he stood by her

Moms need the support of the father of their children. Husbands, your role model is most important too. Live the Christian faith with actions as well as words. Show love, kindness, and support for the mother of your children. Help around the house, spend time with your children and with your wife. Be a spiritual leader in your home; lead the family in prayer, in the study of the Word, and in living the Christian faith. Worship with your wife and children. Remember, the movies you watch, the Websites you visit, the way you conduct yourself will reflect your true self to your children.

Moms, you are special. You are over worked and under paid, under thanked, and far too often, under appreciated. On behalf of all of us, I say, “Thank you mom, we love you!” Moms, follow in the footsteps of Elizabeth. Let her be your role model and you will be blessed by God and loved by your family.

One more thought on mothers. Jesus loved His mother. When his step father Joseph died, Jesus moved His mother to Capernaum. And when Jesus hung on the Cross of Calvary, suffering a most torturous death, fulfilling the most important task in the history of the Earth, Jesus still took the time to be sure His mother Mary, whom He loved dearly, would be taken care of the rest of her life. What is more important than showing love and respect to our mom?

Moms are special. Like Jesus, we all need to remember our mothers, respect them, love them, and treat them special: they are! Let's make everyday a "mother's day!" Whether your mom is living or in glory with our LORD today, thank God for your mother today and every day. IJN, Amen.