

“MAGNETS AND MOMS”
(Proverbs 1:1-8)
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1. Read Text: Proverbs 1:1-8 and Pray.

2. [MAGNETS AND MOMS STORY]

A Second Grade teacher once gave her class a science lesson on magnets and what they do. So, the next day, in order to see if they had learned anything, she gave them a written test in which she included the following question: “*My full name has six letters. The first one is 'M.' I pick up things. What am I?*”

Amazingly, when all the test papers had been turned in, the teacher was astonished to find that over half of the students answered the question with the word “*Mother.*”

3. Well, we all know that being a “good mother” involves more than simply picking things up.

A—So today, as we celebrate and thank God for the “mothers” of our lives on this Mother’s Day, I want us to talk about some of the qualities & characteristics of “good” motherhood (whether from our *biological* mothers or from those who’ve been “*like mothers*” to us).

B—Now, we find at least some of these qualities in today’s scripture from Proverbs 1.

C—And even though this passage wasn’t written to refer *exclusively* to mothers and motherhood, nevertheless I believe that within it we *can* find many such qualities and characteristics that we’d expect to find in good mothers. Let’s talk about three:

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4. First of all, I think this scripture reminds us that at their best, mothers are **SELF-LESS**.

A—That is, what they say and what they do usually at least *tries* to take into account the best interests and needs of their children (rather than their *own* interests and desires).

1—Verse 2 says that the words given there were written... [NRSV] “*...for learning about wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight.*”

[MSG] “*...so we’ll know how to live well and right, to understand what life means and where it’s going.*”

2—In other words, the wisdom offered in these verses is shared *not* for selfish use, but for our “self-less” benefit and growth *towards* others – in today’s case, towards our children/child.

B—Now, we might think that this would be an obvious quality for motherhood.

C–But we live in a society today in which the needs of others– even of our own children– at times gets trampled and overlooked all so that our *own* selfish desires can be met.

1–Consider the prevalence of various forms of child abuse as one example.

2–When we abuse someone else (especially those smaller than us), it merely reveals our own insecurities about ourselves.

3–It says that we can't accept and don't love ourselves, and the only way we can cope with that is by taking it out on others who have less power than us through physical, mental or sexual abuse.

4–So the reality is that abuse of children (or anyone, for that matter) is merely a form of self-hate (or at the very least, a form of extreme selfishness).

D–And yet, far from being self-ISH, most of us here have hopefully seen time and time again examples of *good* mothers who choose to put the cares and needs of their children *first*, often even above their *own* wants and desires – they are self-LESS.

5. A second quality of good mothers that we celebrate today is that they are **WISE** in their dealings with their children – that is: they've learned when to be firm and decisive, and when to be patient and understanding.

A–Verse 3 talks about ... [NRSV] “*gaining instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity*” – [MSG] “*learning what's right and just and fair.*”

1–Now, these three things all have to do with a sense of “fairness”, which is something that can't be known unless and until we take time to get to know and understand a given situation.

2–So, for example, good mothers have learned how to bridle their temper and find out what a situation is *before* applying discipline – that's the “wisdom” described in this verse.

B–It takes wisdom to know the difference between when a child needs discipline, and when they need understanding, or even some combination of both.

1–Sometimes “*righteousness/rightness*” requires a love that is tough and firm, while at other times it requires love that is patient and empathetic.

2–After all, actions and behaviors are often ways of communicating distress, and the rampant violence in today's culture is often simply some people's way of crying out “*Somebody help me! Pay attention to me!*”

3–Now, I'm not saying this should be an excuse for the violence of our world.

4–But it could mean that one answer to our world’s problems is *not* that we need more prisons, but that we need more understanding and empathy of the immense pain and hurt of people all around us.

C–At their best, good mothers have learned this distinction – they’ve learned to be “wise” in their dealings with their children and others, knowing the difference of when to be *firm* and when to be *compassionate*.

6. Well, perhaps the most important quality and characteristic that this passage says is found in good mothers is that they are **GODLY** in their teaching and example.

A–Now, this doesn’t mean that they’re perfect “saints” in absolutely every way – no, they make their share of mistakes like all of us.

B–But good mothers have learned how to live their lives in such a way that their faith in God cannot *help* but be seen by those around them.

1–Verse 7 says that ...[NRSV] “*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*” ; [MSG] ...we are to “*start with God – the first step in learning is bowing down to God.*”

2–In other words, a good mother (or any wise person) has learned that true wisdom begins with an honoring *of* God through a vital, personal relationship *with* God.

C–In fact, many influential Christian leaders throughout history have all attested to the vital role their mothers played in shaping their own faith.

1–For example, the writings of Saint Augustine, Martin Luther, John Wesley, and others all give their mothers credit for raising them in such a way that they could find God and Christian faith for themselves.

2–[STORY OF FOOTPRINTS IN SIDEWALK CEMENT]

Near a church in Kansas City, there’s a cement sidewalk that contains the prints of two baby feet with toes pointing toward a church down the road. The story is that 30 years ago, when the sidewalk was being laid, a mother got permission to stand her baby on the wet cement to make the footprints as a permanent reminder to her child of the direction she wanted to take in life. The tracks are still there today as reminder of that direction.

E–Well, if not physically, then at least spiritually, that’s the goal of every godly mother – that through their Godly teaching and example, the life of their children (and others, for that matter) might be pointed towards God and Christian faith.

7. Verse 8 summarizes all of this in this way: [NRSV] “*Hear, my child, your father's instruction, and do not reject your mother's teaching.*” [MSG] “*Pay close attention, friend, to what your father tells you; [and] never forget what you learned at your mother's knee.*”

A–Friends, today we celebrate the good “*teachings/learnings*” of our mothers.

B–And even if they’re only a memory to us today, or even if they’re not our biological mothers, we celebrate who they are, what they do/have done, and what we’ve learned from them about life in our world today.

C–And if they learned to follow God, then we ALSO learn how to be *Self-less, Wise, and Godly* in all that we say and do.

D–Today, as we consider all that motherhood is, I want to invite us all to take time to thank God for the “mothers” of our lives.

8. [PRAY]

9. [HYMN: #445, “Happy the Home”]