

The Two Sides of Motherhood

1 Thessalonians 2: 7; Proverbs 29: 15, 17

Mother's Day, 2010

I have asked the men to help me in a special gift for all the mothers who are present today. We have a rose for each mother (pass out roses)! Please take a moment to examine the glory of that rose... look at the rainbow-like colors; inhale the sweet aroma; feel the tender, velvety petals.

I think it goes without saying there's a great tenderness in a rose petal; like the tenderness of a baby's face, a rose petal begs to be touched. In fact, roses are a symbol of tenderness. If you give someone a rose, it is received as an expression of tender love and appreciation.

BUT I hasten to add: there is a tough side to a rose, isn't there? Alongside the tender petals are positioned sharp thorns. Consequently, the same rose that is capable of imparting tender beauty is also capable of inflicting pain.

The thorns are not a contradiction of the rose's tenderness. In fact, those thorns are there to protect that tenderness. Thorns prevent the tender petals being taken advantage of.

So get my point: this beautiful creation of God carries both the capacity to caress and to sting. Side by side, we see the forces of tenderness and toughness.

I would like to use these roses as an object lesson today: when you mothers look at the rose you have received, I want you to think of the love relationship you have with your children. Mom, your love must be both tender and tough, just as the rose embodies both tenderness and toughness.

These are the two sides of motherhood.

Tender Loving Care (1 Thessalonians 2: 7)

I read a story about an elementary school teacher who was teaching her 3rd grade class about the properties of magnets, and their capacity to pick things up. On the second day of the lesson series, she gave her children a quiz, and one of the questions was this: My name begins with an "M;" My name has six letters; I pick things up. What am I?

Half the kids in the class wrote "Mother."

A. I love the simple verse in 1 Thessalonians 2: 7, because it aptly describes the tender side of motherhood.

1. Yes, the context of the verse is a teaching about a pastor's tender care for his flock. Paul compares the pastor's care to a mother's care for her children.

2. So I want to zero in on what the text has to say about the universally recognized tender care for her children.

B. A mother's # 1 job description: Provide care for your child.

1. **Gentle:** "from Greek n. Apios; a gentle touch, a tender caress such as in handling a delicate flower." It is used to describe a gentle touch, or a gentle caress, of the hand. In fact it is used when referring to handling a delicate flower tenderly so as not to break it.

2. **Caring:** "from Greek v. Trapho; to nurture something, by working to build it up so it becomes whole, complete, secure, or stable." It literally means to care for something, in the sense you build it up... you work to nourish it so it becomes whole, complete, secure, and stable.

C. Moms, let me pull all this together. The point is this: Tenderness is essential to a child's development, and no one can produce tenderness like a mother can.

1. Men can't do that, try as we might. God did not give us the power to get around the heart of a child like Mom.

2. Ever watched a football game on TV, and the big, physical football players who spend several hours performing with skill and toughness? Then, when one player scores a touchdown, or makes a great play, or somehow distinguishing himself as a skilled player, the camera seeks him out on the bench with his team mates congratulating him. He won't say, "Hey, Dad, thanks for teaching me how to play football!"

3. No! He invariably says, "Hi, Mom!"

4. Why? Dad may have taught how to play football, but through countless displays of tenderness, Mom put her hand around his heart.

D. Moms, don't lose your tender side. If you listen to the voices of the world, you grow ever more hard, aggressive, even mean.

1. The world is hard, and aggressive, and mean enough now. We need you to be tender and gentle.

2. Psychologists tell us a developing child needs to be hugged at least three times a day. And they need it most from you, Mom, because tenderness is your strong suit. Stay tender for your child/ children.

Tough Loving Care (Proverbs 29: 15)

A. Tender love without tough love is like pancake syrup without the pancakes: thick, syrupy, far too sweet, and surely not healthy for you.

1. Tender love needs the balance of discipline.

2. Moms, you must not only show the petals of tenderness, but when there is open defiant disobedience, you must produce the thorns of discipline.

B. Discipline comes from the root word "disciple," which means to train a child or a student.

1. Yes, there is a big difference between discipline and punishment.

2. Punishment seeks to get revenge; hence often a child will hear, "You just wait till we get home!"

3. The child hears with his emotional ears, "I'm ticked off, and as soon as I can do so in private, I will even the score."

4. The child picks up on that, and the words instill fear and terror, which only tears down the child emotionally.

C. Discipline, not punishment, is the goal of the Godly parent.

1. We bring the thorns of pain when there is defiance, but always with the goal of training up a emotionally mature adult, not to get even with a juvenile rebel in order to make me feel vindicated as the authority figure in the relationship.

2. Remember what I referenced a minute ago? Discipline comes from the root word “disciple,” which means our goal is to train our children.

D. Proverbs 29: 15 tells us what happens when we withhold correction. *“The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.”*

1. **There is a value system in children that respects tough love.** Let me repeat that for emphasis: there is a value system in children that respects tough love.

2. Your child by nature wants to know who is in charge in his world – you or him. And I believe he actually wants you to be in charge; after all, you are older, more experienced in the ways of this big, mysterious world.

3. Yes, sooner or later, he will put you to the test in a little game I call “Challenge the Chief!”

4. James Dobson tells of taking his three-year-old son Ryan to a basketball game. Ryan, of course, was interested in every else but the game. So, Dr. Dobson decide to let him roam, with some basic limits. He took Ryan by the hand and walked him to a stripe painted down the side of the court. “You can play all around the building, Ryan, but don’t go past this line.” Well, he had no sooner returned to his seat, then the toddler scurried in the direction of the forbidden territory. He stopped right at the line, flashed a grin at his Dad, put one foot across the line as if to say, “Whatcha gonna do about it?”

E. Make no mistake about it, this is a defining moment in the life and relationship of every parent and child. Who is the chief?

1. Mom and Dad, this is the moment to say clearly, in one syllable words, “I am in charge, and if you step over the line, you will meet up with the thorns.”

Our children are in critical need of parents who have found a wonderful balance between gentle, caring love that shows a softer side, and tough love that seeks to provide training and discipline to develop morally and emotionally stable adults who can productively contribute to society. Will you accept that challenge? To accept means you are willing to make sacrifices of your personal wants and desires at times to put your child’s needs first.

It also means you are willing to forego your own preference to “go easy” on your child when the thorns of tough love are called for in order to teach your child a valuable lesson about responsibility and accountability for one’s actions and decisions.

Most of all, I am convinced our children deserve Christian parents who will impart Godly values and principles to them while they are still in their formative years, and thus are more likely to make a decision to accept Jesus as Savior.

Let’s pray!