

What a Mother Needs
Pastor Norwood N. “Woody” Hingle III, Ph.D.
Mother’s Day, Sunday, May 10, 2020

What is needed for growth? I was reminded about this when I went to a plant nursery this week. E.g., my Mom’s birthday was Tuesday and I wanted to get her a Meyer lemon tree. I realized I know next to nothing about growing a lemon tree, so I talked to the experts—Randy Roberts and a guy at the plant nursery. I learned that the three-foot tree I bought would need at least three things. First, water, and plenty of it—about 15 gallons per week! Second, it does not need competition—no grass in the radius under its branches. And third, it would need tender care, nutrients, and pruning—a cup or so of fertilizer three times a year during basically February, May, and July, and next year only allow it to produce six lemons and take off all the other buds, and then in the second year enjoy the produce! That is what is needed for the growth of a Meyer lemon tree. We may want to ask, what is needed for growth for people and, especially on this Mother’s Day, Mothers! There are at least three things, like Meyer lemon trees, I think we need to know.

“A Mother needs both kinds of earthly Fathers. Cf. Genesis 1:26-28; 2:24; Mark 5:21-24a,35-43. This is like the nutrients and pruning that a Meyer lemon tree needs. Dr. James Dobson states, ‘. . . A daughter’s sense of self-worth and confidence is linked directly to her relationship with her dad. What he thinks about her and how he expresses his affection is a central source of her perceived value as a human being. It also affects her femininity and teaches her how to relate to boys and men. . . Dads who want to connect with their little girls, and even those who are not so little, need to spend one-on-one time with them. It is an excellent way to knock down walls and build bridges. Take your daughter somewhere she will like, such as out to breakfast or dinner. It doesn’t have to be a big deal. Just make it a quiet time together when the two of you can sit and talk.’” (*Bringing Up Girls*, p. 88,96).” I mention here that a Mother needs both kinds of Fathers. The first kind is a Father to her children— i.e., she needs a husband. Scripture is clear about this. READ Genesis 1:26-28; 2:24. Jesus reiterates the truth from the creation account in Matthew 19:1-9. This may be somewhat controversial today. Psychologist Kevin Leman has written, “You know, one of the things that really troubles me about many of my colleagues in the discipline of psychology is that they promote the notion that men and women are really the same— that the differences between us are physical and nothing more. Well. . . ‘tain’t true. Men and women are different” (*Sex Begins in the Kitchen*, p. 17). One of the things he points to is the hormone testosterone (p. 29) which men have in much greater supply than women— about 4 to 15 times as much as women have. This makes men more aggressive. And Mothers need a good, godly man to help her raise her children. But the statistics today are against women. E.g., from a Child Trends reporting from 2016 40% of all children born in the U.S. are born to unwed mothers, and this is up from 28% in 1990. What this statistic tells us is that men are there for part of the child rearing years, but often gone for most of it.

Some of the people I most admire are single mothers. E.g., I have heard of one single mother who, when she gets home from work, has to make supper, help her child with his homework, get him ready for bed, and then finally get to bed herself and start all over early in the morning. If you want to be a Mother today, I strongly encourage you from the Bible that the way God has intended that to happen is through marriage to have a Father for your children and to assist you, partner with you. If you are an unwed Mother, for whatever reason, please know that the church wants to be there for you— and that is why a church family is so important. It is at church that your children will meet godly men who can in a sense be Fathers to your children and guide them in the way they should go. The second kind of Fathers Mothers need is a Dad. I.e., a Mother needs a good Father for herself. READ Mark 5:21-24a,35-43. I love this passage because we can see the deep, desperate love the Dad had for his daughter; he loved her tremendously, and Jesus wanted to be sure to be there for him. I can imagine the great joy Jesus had in knowing that He was going to restore the Dad's daughter to him, this daughter who was precious enough to him that he would seek out Jesus! I want to address you Dads out there who have daughters who are Mothers-in-training. The two best way for you to prepare your daughters to one day be Mothers is for you first to love their Mothers (your wives) and, second, to invest yourselves in your daughters and love them. Mother-daughter relationships are very important— Dads can *never* replace Mothers. But in a similar way, Mothers can *never* replace Dads. That is what Dr. James Dobson is saying in this text which I am quoting in the Sermon Notes. Please look over it again. He talks about spending one-on-one time with your daughters when they are little and not so little. What daughters need from their Dads is not just quality time, but quantity of time— they need both. And they need it more than they need our money. E.g., I love watching Scott Bond with his daughter Mairin. They come to church together, and I love seeing them as they are walking into church and the strong attachment they have.

And after church they leave together, and it is clear she loves this pattern in her life with her Dad, and he does too. Mairin is learning indirectly through this how to relate to men, and how she deserves respect from men. E.g., yesterday my daughter Emily finished her semester at LSU and we went for a jog together and then had a picnic on a bench in City Park overlooking the lake and the museum, and we had a great time where I could ask her about her relationships, what she was learning, and her relationship with Jesus. I could encourage her with all the good things I see going on with her life. It was a wonderful blessing for me to be with her one-on-one! Part of preparing our daughters to be Mothers is that we as Dads encourage them verbally, and that is the type of respect they deserve from other men.

“A Mother needs high family fidelity. Cf. Proverbs 31:26-29.” This is like the Meyer lemon tree that needs no competition for all it needs to survive. E.g., I recall when I was growing up my parents had a stereo cabinet in the living room and one of the little signs it had on the name of the stereo cabinet was “high fidelity”, and I wondered growing up what that meant. I now know it meant that the sound coming out of the speakers were faithful to what the sound was intended out of the record it would play. In a similar way, Motherhood involves faithfulness and loyalty, and this in at least two ways. First, a Mother needs to give family fidelity—loyalty first to the Lord, which we will discuss in a bit, loyalty to her husband and marriage, and loyalty to her children— in that order. It is only after this that she would be loyal to her career. I know this goes counter to much in our culture today, where a woman must be self-actualized, but the fact of the matter is a Mother’s husband and children need her more than her job does. E.g., in the course of teaching parenting classes, one of the truths that has come out to me is that it is ok for a Mother to have a career and job outside the home, but not if the job regularly takes her out of town. And Mothers who elect to stay at home with their children should be encouraged to do so. E.g., my Mom was a

physical therapist and gave up a career in that to be at home with my sisters and me, and it was a subconscious source of peace for me to know that while I was at school my Mom was always available for me. And I encourage you if you are a boss of a Mother in the workplace, to give her the flexibility to tend to her family when they are in need. E.g, I recall talking to a Mother who was the executive secretary to a senior pastor at a good-size church, and one day her young son was ill and had to stay at home from school, so she told the senior pastor that she needed to go home to be with her son, and she said perhaps she could take the typewriter with her home to work there, and the pastor said in effect, “yes, do that”. She did not like that— her son was sick, and she needed to tend to him, not worry about getting letters out for the pastor; she felt he should have been looking out for her and her son. And she was right. But Mother needs not only to give loyalty to the family, she must also receive it. READ vv 28-29. E.g., this past SONrise service I had people share what they appreciated about their Mothers and it was a wonderful time hearing stories where they praised their Moms for teaching them how to write papers for school and how to sew and being there for them. It was wonderful to hear Beryl Lynn share about how much she loved her Mother and was even tearing up (her Mother passed away after Katrina) and Randy share how he lost his Mother when he was about 21, and how she loved the Lord and encouraged him to sing for the Lord, which he is doing today. One of the ways our Mothers can receive faithfulness, loyalty from us today, even if they are deceased, is to speak respectfully of them. They are not perfect, but then, neither are we; but God gave them to us as our Mothers, and for that reason alone they deserve our respect and appreciation. And of course if your Mother is alive today, we need to be sure to show them the love and appreciation and encouragement they so rightly deserve.

“A Mother needs biblical faith. Cf. Proverbs 31:30.” This is like the Meyer lemon tree that needs 15 gallons of water a week! Jesus said in John 7:37-38 that

He is the living water that nourishes our souls. I have said it before and I will say it again-- this verse was my guiding advice when I was single and looking for a wife— having an attractive wife was fine, but what was even more important was her heart for the Lord. Did she fear people and ultimately want to please them, or did she fear God and ultimately want to please Him? Not that we have a terror of God; in 1 John 4f:18 we read that perfect love casts out fear. God is to be greatly respected, and of course He is the Judge over where people will be in eternity as to whether they have accepted Him or rejected Him, whether they will be in heaven or hell. But He desires for us to know Him as our Father who adores us. And God graciously honored that by giving me Elena, who is beautiful on the inside and outside! A Mother needs to be sure to nurture her relationship with Jesus. This is the most important relationship she has in this world— more important than her husband and children. E..g, I recall this week getting a call from Jean Frymire, a Mother in her 90's— someone who sent her the Upper Room devotional book was unable to do so, and the new May-June edition was out and she did not have it, and she wanted to know if I could send her a copy, and I gladly brought it to her. E.g., I recall hearing Pic Cyr tell me that he would talk to his Mom on Sundays, and she, who lived in Jeanerette, LA, would ask Pic, who lived in New Orleans, if he went to church. A lot of times he was out fishing and he would not lie to her. But she persisted. And then one day Gayle Sewell invited him to Lake Vista UMC, and he immediately fell in love with this church and started to grow in the Lord, and his Mom was happy he had found a church home.

We are used to tending to plants, even Meyer lemon trees. How much more do we need to be tending Mothers— those who are Mothers today, and those who are up and coming Mothers. They need both kinds of Fathers— a husband who loves and cares for them, and young girls need their Dads to prepare them for being Mothers and know they deserve respect and kindness from men. They need family fidelity, both to give it and to receive it back. And Mothers need a biblical

faith, both to be nourished in it and to give it to her children and family. This is a huge endeavor before us, and is greatly needed. Let us pray that the Lord would have used our time together today to bear fruit for His Kingdom with Mothers.