

The Delights of a Word Filled Wife and Mother

Titus 2:4

One of the great blessings in life comes from knowing what God wants you to do and doing it. That way of life Jesus described as His chosen path. He once said that He delighted in doing God's Will.

For us who know and love the Lord, life is a delight. We know why He made us, what we are to do for Him, and so we face each new day knowing that the Lord is with us, His strength is ours, and His smile is upon us. Like Jesus we delight to follow His plan.

God commends to us the sheer delight that comes to wives and mothers who follow His plan. Paul tells us that they are catapulted to the front ranks of God's most decorated servants (I Timothy 2:15)—just through the obedience of nurturing children for the glory of God.

Nurturing Love

Paul himself takes on a picture of a gentle and loving mother, nursing her children, as the example of how he sought to disciple and nurture the church. Paul's a role model that we can follow as we think of the lifelong calling to love and pray for our children. Our children by God's grace can become our brothers and sisters in Christ, and by our nurturing love, can become our life long friends.

That is the delightful path God asks us to follow as parents to those children He gives as our heritage from the Lord. To see this love that can be felt lived out and described, think of Paul in I Thessalonians 2.

Usually when I hear the name Paul, I think tough.

- A man **so rugged** he could hike across some of the most difficult roads of the ancient world (the Taurus Mountains of Turkey).
- A man **so fearless** that he could get up from being stoned and face a mob that drags him in to get beaten and put into stocks in a dark, inner dungeon.
- A man **so strong** that he can go for days without food in a sinking ship, dashed about on a stormy sea, preaching to the scared silly sailors, the God who wanted to save them.
- A man so dedicated he was willing to lose everything so that he could tell people who had not yet heard, about Christ's love.

And that is just scratching the surface of the incredibly strong, unstoppable dynamo we know as Paul. He could face off without flinching and confront: angry crowds, destructive mobs, mortal enemies, demonized servant girls screaming, angry magistrates, and even 20,000 chanting idol worshippers who wanted his head in Ephesus.

But one picture stays in my mind when I think of Paul's method. God pulls back the curtain and shows us his secret, in Paul's first epistle, a personal letter on how he disciplined and nurtured believers called I Thessalonians.

Please open to I Thessalonians 2:1-12 and listen to the way Paul communicated love that could be felt. Yes, this rugged, tough, fearless, man's man was able to communicate love that could be felt.

*For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. ² But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. ³ For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. ⁴ But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. ⁵ For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. ⁶ Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. ⁷ But we **were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.** ⁸ So, **affectionately longing** for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. ⁹ For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; ¹¹ as you know how we **exhorted, and comforted, and charged** every one of you, **as a father does his own children,** ¹² that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.*

Paul loved the saints as tenderly and gently as a mother nursing an infant she loved. Paul took pagans to the God of all grace, and saw them saved and nurtured in the ways of the Lord, by his tender love.

Paul Practiced Ways to Make His Love Felt

Today like Paul, each of us are part of something big, something grand, something that dwarfs everything else. Today through Jesus Christ, you and I are a part of what God has chosen as **His priority in the Universe**. And in Titus 2 we each find our part of the script. Wives and moms, do you remember your twin priorities in Titus 2:4?

Godly wives are first of all those who love their husbands with love he can feel; and godly mothers who are in step with God's Spirit and allow Him to energize them by His grace, are "lovers of children".

This character quality God seeks in godly moms is captured on paper by Paul with only one word in the Greek text: **philoteknos** and it means to be a lover of children. It is the second phrase of Titus 2:4: *that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, **to love their children.***

Today we are finishing up God's marching orders for godly wives and mothers. Our theme is that godly moms are in partnership with God and they love their children with love that can be felt.

Moms, never forget that today you have a mission from God, you are in partnership with Him. He asks you to allow Him to strengthen you inside your heart to express love that your children can feel.

I hope that today you will embrace that calling, and live God's priority for your life. Dorothy Patterson, one of the authors of *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, puts the issue into focus:

"A mother builds something far more magnificent than any cathedral in the dwelling place for an immortal soul...No professional pursuit so uniquely combines the most menial tasks with the most meaningful opportunities."¹

Make sure your loved ones in your family feel your love. To help them receive and be touched by your love, we can try to use those several key ingredients that we saw in Paul's ministry to Timothy. These small choices always help us to communicate affirmation and encouragement.

Little Choices to Give Away Love

1. Godly moms partnering with God in raising their children: love their children in a way that can be felt **when they prepare special words for them.**

Like Paul they used tender and encouraging words to help his son in the faith Timothy, they speak to their children. And Like Paul they won't belittle their children for their weaknesses and tears. We should always remember that hugs aren't enough. Tell your children how you feel about them! Those who are left to fill in the blanks often feel worthless and insecure. At best, only confusion can come from silence.

¹ Dorothy Patterson, "The High Calling of Wife and Mother in Biblical Perspective," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 367.

Far too many of us are really not that encouraging. It's not that we have a critical spirit. Rather, we just say nothing. Our loved ones are not mind readers. We can do better than just expecting them to know we are in their corner, loving and admiring them silently. They need to hear it! Grace-energized-mothers make an effort to catch them doing something good, right, thoughtful, considerate, well done, etc. and point it out. Highlight it! "Hey, you really handled that situation very well."

2. Godly moms partnering with God in raising their children: love their children in a way that can be felt **when they attach high value to them.**

Remember what we saw in Paul, how he told Timothy he had a "treasure" entrusted him; and that he was "gifted"; and that God was "going to use him". Grace-energized-mothers tell their children the qualities you admire in them.

3. Godly moms partnering with God in raising their children: love their children in a way that can be felt **when they picture a bright future for them.**

Paul told Timothy about a "crown" that was awaiting him as he ran the "race" set before him; and that the Lord was going to "reward" him. So we also should express what God can do with them as they follow Him in their life. Grace-energized-mothers explain to their children how they can become the greatest servant of the Lord in what ever field God has gifted them. Explain why you think their gifts and character traits will be useful throughout their lives. Avoid the overuse of negative admonitions; use Biblical affirmations to inspire confident dependence upon God.

4. Godly moms partnering with God in raising their children: love their children in a way that can be felt **when they make a commitment to walk through life with them.**

One of Christ's most precious promises to us is that He is with us always, to the end (Matthew 28:20). We can express so much love that can be felt as we stand by our children through the months and years ahead to help make our words of affirmation become a reality.

Express ways you want to be a deeper part of their life (monthly dates, weekly prayer studies, nightly prayer times, on going shared prayer list, etc.) Don't quit as soon as you miss a scheduled time because of a conflict or your loved one hurts or discourages you, or your child fails in some area. What words rang in Christ's disciples ears from the "Great Commission"? For the rest of their life they heard Him say, "I am with YOU always!"

5. Godly moms partnering with God in raising their children: love their children in a way that can be felt **when they make a commitment to pray through life with them.**

Godly-mothers pray for their children. Let them know you've made a commitment to pray for them. Start a life-long prayer list with specific areas that you have learned from them need prayer, and then PRAY.

Ask for updates. Celebrate answers. Pray together. If you are not praying for them each day, who is?

Regardless of their age, they need you to lift them up before the Lord in prayer each day. Think about their day. Think about their setting. Think about the people they will be with. Pray about these situations.

We need all the help we can get, and much of what happens to us or to our children in this life is beyond our control, but can be entrusted each day prayerfully to God's control. John 17 is Christ's model prayer for us to treasure just as His disciples did back then as they heard Him pray for THEM. That is giving them a ***heart that prays***.

6. Godly moms partnering with God in raising their children: love their children in a way that can be felt **when they use meaningful touches with them.**

That is what Jesus did (Mark 10:16) when he blessed the children, He was always touching those He ministered to. He could have healed them with a word, eight times in Mark alone Jesus touches those He served. So should we!

The act of touch is a key to communicating warmth and affirmation. It is even essential to physical health. Be generous with your hugs.

7. Godly moms partnering with God in raising their children: love their children in a way that can be felt **when they become a student of their child's life.**

Jesus started His ministry with the Twelve by one simple plan in Mark 3:14, "and He ordained 12 that ***they should be with Him***". Watch them, share their ups and downs; know where they are in their spiritual life, their school life, work life, home life. Find out who they are close to and who they are not close to—and why. Just a few ways that we can study our child's life:

- **Take an interest in whatever seems to interest your children.** Become a close observer and recorder of what delights your child. Spend enough time with them to identify some of their joys. Love that can be felt involves learning how to get into his or her world.
- **Be lovingly persistent in communicating with your children.** That is, keep trying to set up times when meaningful communication can occur. Find the times when they want to talk, when they want to open the windows of their hearts.
- **Share activities.** Use any means possible to build friendship. Invite them to join you as you go to the grocery store, or try building a family time camping together, or even just ask them to do what you are doing

with you (cooking, yard work, running errands). It is always loving: to want them, include them, and ask for them to spend time with you.

- **Take the initiative in asking your children questions.** Have an endless learning time asking about what they think, what they feel, what they like or don't like—and why. Learn their favorite flavor, favorite food, favorite activity, dreamed of place to go, and so much more. Write it down afterward to see what you remembered, and ask again until you do remember. Then surprise them with something they like!
- **Listen to your children with full attention.** Let them see your eyes light up when they talk to you.

8. Godly moms partnering with God in raising their children: love their children in a way that can be felt **when they meet their needs with love:** a regular schedule of nutritious meals, clean clothes, clean bodies, adequate sleep and rest. Give them a **heart that serves**. And as we do so we add to that more gifts:

- Give them a **heart that rejoices** and is filled with happiness. Psalm 113:9 describes a “joyful” mother.
- Give them a **heart that gives** like Christ's (Mark 10:45): because love gives (John 3:16); because love is generous (II Cor. 9:6); because love expects nothing back (Luke 6:35).
- Give them a **heart that plays** and is full of fun.
- Give them a **heart that celebrates** all their special days (Matthew 5:41); and since we have to do all those things in the family, why not make them special!
- Give them a **heart that prefers your family first** (Titus 2:4 says they are your first priority after your husband).
- Give them a **heart that is focused** (Matthew 6:24).
- Give them a **heart that is present** and attentive (Psalm 119:10 ‘my whole heart’).
- Give them a **heart that trusts** in the Lord (Isaiah 26:3 ‘perfect peace...trusts’).²

Mothers Energized by Grace Cultivate Spiritual Assets

A servant of God has their heart set on spiritual treasures and measures life by the acquisition of spiritual assets rather than merely physical assets. Do you keep track of your **Spiritual Assets**? Often we know our house value, our retirement investment value, the worth of our collections and treasures—but do you keep an inventory of spiritual assets? What are some of our spiritual assets?

These are things like:

² Adapted from Elizabeth George, *A Woman after God's Own Heart*, Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997, chapters 7, 10, and 11.

- Knowing **where your kid's are reading in God's Word** so they remember when they grow up and leave home that you always cared how they were doing spiritually.
- Asking your husband or wife each week **what they are finding in God's Word** that is helping them to make it through the day. And, actually remembering what they said the last time because you care. This is a spiritual treasure because it forges a strong bond in your hearts of a shared spiritual walk.
- Finding and learning scripture **memory verses that you share in common with your loved ones** are a spiritual treasure. Not hundreds or even dozens, but a handful that you all have learned and share in common. What a treasure to quote them around the living room when the power goes out, or an ice storm cancels church, or when you are traveling, to have this body of Scripture that you together as a couple and a family learned is a true spiritual treasure. Some of the more valuable passages are Psalm 23, the love chapter--I Corinthians 13, the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, and key verses on the tongue and faith in James.
- Collecting **testimonies of salvation** is a record of each person's greatest treasure, isn't it? The only thing that lasts forever from this world will be people and whatever we send up to Heaven before we leave. So, who are you taking to Heaven with you? Have you heard, understood, and savored the testimonies of your family? Can you tell your husband's or wife's testimony? How about your children? What an incredible treasure is our salvation. Take a spiritual inventory of the status of each soul around you in those you love.
- Recording and remembering those **spiritual milestones**, have you started on this spiritual asset yet? Do you record your loved ones salvation date, baptism date, when they started the habit of personal devotional quiet times, what they are doing in that QT? Have you started yet to celebrate each other's spiritual birthdays? Do you keep a record of, share and celebrate any souls led to Christ by you or by loved ones, and then uphold them by prayer? Who can your family say that you as a family are "taking to Heaven"?
- Finally, one of the great spiritual treasures is a **lifelong prayer journal**. Even if you've never started, it is never too late to start watching God at work through prayer. Any type of list will do, just date it, hold onto it, and be specific enough in your requests—and there you have it—an actual record of the God of Heaven moving in and through your life by prayer. A list of family needs, specific challenges, hurdles, obstacles, great goals, and so on are all prayed over. As well the verses for Christ's formation in the lives of those you love are always such a tool. Just a sheet of paper, dated, written out and prayed over faithfully until it wears out and then a new one started will harvest great spiritual gains and treasures.

Following the Script God Left for Us

Today you and I are part of something big, something grand, something that dwarfs even all our exciting summer vacation plans, or the harsh realities of life that consume

us like our broken down cars, wearing out houses, lost jobs, bad health, work pressures, social problems, or even personal loneliness. Today through Jesus Christ, you and I are a part of what God has chosen as ***His priority in the Universe.***

And moms, Titus 2:4 says that God wants you to allow Him to share that second priority He has given you, summed up in one word in the Greek text, ***philoteknos*** and it means to be a lover of children.

And that ***phileo*** love that is emotional, close, and visible is what the Lord asks from grace-energized mothers towards their children.

I hope that today you will be that calling to be God's priority for your life.

APPENDIX:

Mothers Energized by Grace Cultivate Habits that Demonstrate their Love³

1. *Mothers Energized by Grace love their children anyway.* Yes I know you love them. Most of us parents adore our children — most of the time. Yet, some parents have a way of regularly communicating to their children that they do not measure up. I'm thinking now about the young girl who grew up in a family where she was seen as the dunce. Now as a young woman, she continues to experience the same from her family. Children need parents who will believe in them and no matter what will love them anyway.
2. *Mothers Energized by Grace prepare their children for the battleground, not the playground.* Some parents constantly buy their children toys, gadgets, candy, McDonalds, etc. The kids then get into their high school years and the pampering continues. Only now, the toys are much more expensive. What does that communicate to these children? Meanwhile, other parents prepare their children for life on the battleground where a spiritual battle is taking place. These parents realize that children need more than toys. They need to be equipped for life so that they will survive the difficulties and trials they will face.
3. *Mothers Energized by Grace deal with their own issues.* There are no perfect human beings. Yet, if you don't deal with your own issues (your sins, your insecurities, your feelings of inadequacy, etc.), these can impact your children. They may end up having to deal with some of the very issues you would never grapple with.
4. *Mothers Energized by Grace take every opportunity to remind them of who they are in Christ.* They will, most likely, receive many false messages about their identity. They will be told that their worth is based upon their academic record, their physical attractiveness, their charm, their ability to make money, etc. You bless your children when you help them grow up with a sense of their real identity.
5. *Mothers Energized by Grace bless your children by giving them you.* Jesus called the 12 to spend time with Him (Mark 3:14) and that was the great expression of His love. So should we commit to spend time with those we love. There is no substitute for your presence in their lives. Your regular, consistent, emotional and physical presence means so much. I have known a few parents who seem to see their child as one more activity on the list of things to be done for the day. Yet one senses there is no real connection between parent and child. Being attentive and giving one-on-one time are priceless gifts to children.

³ Posted by Jim Martin at January 16th, 2007 online at <http://www.godhungry.org/?p=592>

6. *Mothers Energized by Grace say only what communicates value, respect, and love.* Choose to never say or do anything that will humiliate. Sometimes, families will tell embarrassing, humiliating, stories about their children. The child is embarrassed at this but then the parent says, "I'm just kidding." (In other words, "Since I think this is funny, you shouldn't let this bother you.") Listen, we all do things in our families that are silly, stupid, mindless, careless, etc. I have found that it is much better for me to tell about something silly or stupid that I did — not my children. Children need to know that homes are safe places where one's mistakes are not announced to the world.
7. *Mothers Energized by Grace want to be their child's greatest encourager.* Far too many parents are really not that encouraging. It's not that they have a critical spirit. Rather, they just say nothing. Children are not mind readers. We can do better than just expecting them to know we are in their corner. They need to hear it! Make an effort to catch them doing something good, right, thoughtful, considerate, well done, etc. and point it out. Highlight it! "Hey, you really handled that situation very well."
8. *Mothers Energized by Grace Give them what they need not what they want.* Many of us are very busy people. We have a lot going on. So often, parents will feel guilty about how busy they are and so decide to give them a new "toy." Yet, we do our children no favors when we give them most everything they want. The point is this: Too many children grow up getting all the things they want while little attention is given to what they really need. Think about what your children really need if they are going to make it in this difficult world as obedient children of a loving God.
9. *Mothers Energized by Grace Give their children something to look forward to when they come home.* Give them a beautiful home to look forward to. That's home — not house. Anyone with enough money can build a beautiful house. Our children need beautiful homes. Homes that are filled with warmth, laughter, and love. Beautiful homes are places where children can catch a glimpse of the loving God in the love of their parents. These homes remind kids that no matter how bad the day is at school or with friends, they can always come home.