

Godly Mothers, in Partnership with God Love Their Children Titus 2:4

Today we are right in the middle of looking at 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.

But before we plunge into those Titus 2 methods of loving husbands and children with love they can feel, a quality that God wants every wife and mom to know and practice, we need to turn to the book of I Thessalonians 4 and ask, "Why are we even here studying God's Word today? What is the bigger picture of what God wants from all of us."

The Bible is written to be profitable to Christ's Church, and all of us need to pause from time to time and look beyond our niche in His church and see the grand view of all that He is doing in and through us. That is why all of us have sacrificed another hour-plus to gather in this building and study God's Word. Each of us have a Spirit-implanted desire to be a good and faithful servant to God as we do our part for the glory of Christ in His church! Always remember that:

The Big Picture is Partnership with God

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.***

We are in partnership with GOD. Think of that. You and I are equity holders in something that will never end, never fail, never decay--we are a vital part of Christ's church!

God's plan to work in the world is through His church. Why not remind yourself of that by looking at three passages of Scripture with me. As we open to I Thessalonians 4, you

may even want to pencil in the first of three words we will use to summarize our high calling from the pages of your Bibles.

The first word for your purpose in life is MISSION.

- Each of us in Christ's church has **a mission** that Paul summarized as "Pleasing God" (I Thessalonians 4:1) "Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how **you ought to walk and to please God**" (NKJV).

We have a mission to please, glorify, serve, and live for God. So if you are a teacher, please God in the way you teach; and if you are a nurse, please God in the way you care for people; and if you are a student, please God in the way you study; and if you are an engineer, a retiree, what ever you do to fill your day—your mission is to please God.

The second word describing each of our purpose in life is MESSAGE:

- Our mission is accomplished by the proclamation of **a message** Paul summarized as "the Gospel of Grace" (Acts 20:24) "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, **to testify to the gospel** of the grace of God (NKJV).

This message of grace—that God did everything possible to be done and anyone can come to Him merely by faith seems impossible. The Gospel is the message of an endless source of divine energy for abundant living!

The third word and final word that sums up our collective purpose in life is METHOD:

- But the most amazing part is that God's plan to do all this through us is by **a method** spelled out in Titus 2. Paul summarized this plan as men and women energized by God's grace to live in partnership with God, a lifestyle that is otherwise impossible.

If you want a summary of our lives as believers it would be: We were saved by God's grace; we are kept by God's grace; and we live in a partnership with God, a way that pleases Him and earns His rewards—**energized by His grace**.

Grace that Energizes Our Actions

God's plan to work in the world is His church. Christ's church may be described as a group of people, energized by grace, doing the impossible for the glory of God. A key insight into God's method to reach the world through Christ's church is in Titus chapter 2.

Those new believers, fresh out of paganism needed coaching, training, modeling, and encouraging in a one-on-one relationship. Godly behavior is a series of choices; and those men and women had to be nurtured in daily skills that would lead to loving marriages and families.

Now open with me back in Titus 2:1-5, and follow along as we read these powerful words again:

But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: ² that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; ³ the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— ⁴ that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

So how did God instruct Paul to prepare Christ's church for these great social challenges and family pressures? Again, God's Word has the solution. God says that the way that tired, burned out, and depressed mothers get relief is from the faithful army of godly grace-energized role models.

Lovers of Children

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.

God is here reminding us that from time to time it becomes so very hard to take care of children. And moms of any century in history come to times when they no longer "feel" positive feelings towards her children. Parenting is hard, but God's grace is always able to give us the strength to do His will.

The Bible clearly explains and illustrates this type of emotional love that was modeled by Christ. This love of close, companionship and friendship, is an emotional love that describes Christ's relationship with Lazarus (John 11:3); and with "the disciple He loved" named John (John 20:2). This is also the word used in Revelation 3:19 for Christ's love for true saints in His church.

Jesus demonstrated His love to Lazarus and all who saw that friendship knew how close they were. The same was seen in Christ's closeness to the Apostle John. That is how

Jesus loves us, and wants us to know He loves us, feeling His closeness, and enjoying His friendship.

And that **phileo** love that is emotional, close, and visible is what the Lord asks godly mothers to express towards their children. God says He wants moms in partnership with Him, strengthened by His grace to:

Give the Priceless Gift of Love to Your Children¹

Do your loved ones in your family *feel* your love?

Many husbands think that their wives admire other men more than them, especially as their wives say how, "So-and-so's husband does this and that with his children or for his wife...". Those **men do not feel the respect and admiration** of their wives.

Likewise, many wives feel that their husbands think other women are either better at caring for their husbands, prettier, or better at caring for their families than they are. Those **women do not feel the love and devotion** of their husbands.

But most importantly for Titus 2 mothers energized by grace, we need to consider that many kids hurt because they sense that their parents don't even *like* them. Some ways a lack of love can harm our child.

- A struggling student watches his parents gloat about his sister's straight A's.
- A boy strikes out in a softball game and notices his father's disappointment.
- An overweight daughter is told, "Stop snacking so much if you even *care* about your looks."

This absence of loving approval, can lead to untold pain; whereas loved ones who feel approval and love face the daily challenges in their world with eagerness and confidence.

Look with me for a moment at how Paul cultivated this type of love with a needy young man named Timothy. The mighty pastor of the church at Ephesus was also a young man with many physical and emotional needs. Paul nurtured his son in the faith Timothy, with love that could be seen and felt. That means:

Paul Loved his "son" Timothy and it was Felt

Paul loved his "son" in the faith. So as our example, how was his "love" for Timothy his "son" in the faith expressed? One of the most beautiful testimonies to the power of

¹ These ideas are adapted from *The Blessing* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986, Nashville) and *The Blessing Workbook* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, Nashville) by Gary Smalley and John Trent, Ph.D.

encouragement (or affirmation) in the New Testament is in the life of the Apostle Paul. If you turn to I Timothy 1 listen as Paul explained to Timothy who he saw him to be:

- Paul told Timothy publicly that he was a gift from God to his life, because Timothy was **'a true son'** (I Timothy 1:2); "To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord" (NKJV);
- Paul told others that Timothy's life was deeply useful to God, because he was **'an example to the flock'** (I Timothy 4:12) "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (NKJV);
- Paul told Timothy that there was a unique and divine calling on his life because he **'had a gift'** (I Timothy 4:14) "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership" NKJV and needed to **'stir it up'** (II Timothy 1:6) "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (NKJV).
- Paul was very careful to not **'belittle Timothy for his weaknesses'** (1 Timothy 5:23) "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities" (NKJV), and 'his frequent tears' (2 Timothy 1:4) "greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy" (NKJV).
- Paul told Timothy he had a **"treasure"** entrusted him (I Timothy 6:20) "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—(NKJV), and that he should never stop no matter what lay ahead because he was **'gifted'**.
- Paul reminded Timothy of his incredible spiritual heritage **'and that from a child'** (II Timothy 3:15) "and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (NKJV).
- Paul also told Timothy that God was **'going to use him and reward him'** (2 Timothy 4:8) "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing (NKJV).

So Paul demonstrated how to love a "child" (in the faith) in the manner he loved Timothy; and shows how to love someone with love they could feel. Paul "affirmed" Timothy, and used tender and encouraging words to help him as his son in the faith Timothy. These exhortations were tenderly given to a struggling young man.

Practice Ways to Make your Love Felt

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 see in Paul's ministry to Timothy. These small choices always help us to communicate affirmation and encouragement.

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. 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.** Stand by your loved one through the months and years ahead to help make your 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.** *Grace-energized-mothers pray for their children.* Let them know you've done so. 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 the 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. 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.
 - **Take an interest in whatever seems to interest your children.** 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.
 - **Share activities.** Go to the grocery store, try 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).
- 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

Today you and I 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**.

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.

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