

LESSONS FOR THE SISTERS

Lesson 15

Motherhood (1)

The Need of Mothers in Raising Up the Next Generation for the Church Life

Scripture Reading: Psa. 127:2-3; Prov. 22:6; 2 Tim. 1:5; Titus 2:4; 1 Sam. 1:1-20

I. The responsibility over the future of the children of the next generation is on the shoulders of the parents—Prov. 22:6:

- A. The church cannot go on if the parents do not have a sense of being entrusted—Psa. 127:2-3:
1. Throughout church history, the greatest failure among Christians is the failure in parenting; this is something no one cares much about.
 2. God has placed a person's body, soul, and spirit, and even his whole life and future, into our hands; no individual influences another individual's future as much as parents, and no one controls a person's future as much as parents.
 3. We have to realize how serious this responsibility is; it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their children turn out the right way—Eph. 6:4b.
 4. Suppose we beget children, lose them to the world, and then try to rescue them back; if we allow this to happen, the gospel will never be preached to the uttermost part of the earth.
- B. We need to see the responsibilities of parents; we need to consider the Christian way of parenting; the knowledge of this will save us from many headaches:
1. All parents must sanctify themselves before God for the sake of their children—cf. John 17:19.
 2. Parents must also walk with God—Gen. 5:21-22:
 - a. After Enoch begat Methuselah, the Bible says that he walked with God.
 - b. When the burden of the family was upon him, he started to feel his weakness; he felt that his responsibility was too great and that he could not manage it by himself; so he began to walk with God.
 - c. His responsibility as a parent did not hinder him from walking with God; rather, it caused him to walk with God.
 - d. In order for us to bring our children to the Lord in a genuine way, we need to be a person who walks with God:
 - 1) We cannot send our children to heaven merely by pointing our fingers to heaven; we have to walk in front of them.
 - 2) Only then can we ask our children to follow us.
 3. The father and mother must be of one mind in order for the family to be healthy—cf. Phil. 4:2-3, 2:2; Rom. 12:16, 15:5; 2 Cor. 13:11.
 4. Parents cannot exercise despotic control over their children.
 5. Parents should not provoke their children to anger—Eph. 6:4a; Col. 3:21.
 6. Parents should nurture their children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord—Eph. 6:4b; Prov. 1:8-9, 13:24, 22:6, 15, 29:15, 17.
 7. Parents should lead the children to the knowledge of the Lord—2 Tim. 1:5, 3:15; Deut. 6:6-7:
 - a. No family can go on without prayer and the reading of the word—cf. 6:6-7.
 - b. Family meetings should be on the level of the children and should be encouraging and attracting; your meeting should be short, living, and never long; perhaps ten minutes is enough.

8. The atmosphere in the family should be love—Eph. 5:1-2, 25-31; Col. 3:19; Titus 2:4.

C. “I cannot tell you how many strong believers would be raised up in our second generation if all the parents of this generation would be good parents. I have always wanted to say this: The future of the church depends on the parents. When God bestows grace on the church, He needs vessels. There is the need for more Timothys to be raised up. It is true that we can save men from the world, but there is a greater need for raising up people from among Christian families”—*Messages for Building Up New Believers*, vol. 2, p. 549.

II. In one sense we need a good mother more than we need a good father; a good father can do much good for his children but what he does is not so practical and subjective; the real, secret, practical, and subjective help comes not from the father’s side but from the mother’s—2 Tim. 1:5.

III. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, was seeking God and spontaneously coordinated and cooperated with God; this afforded God the way to replace the waning priesthood under Eli with a new priesthood raised up by God through her son Samuel; Samuel, the issue of his mother Hannah’s coordination and cooperation with God, became a faithful Nazarite according to his mother’s desire for God and rendered to God the way to end the corrupted age of the judges and to bring in the age of kingship and the prophethood—1 Sam. 1:1-20, 3:20, 16:13:

A. We need to be impressed with Samuel’s origin, with his source; because he came out of such a strong source, he could not be an ordinary, worldly person; rather, he was the one who replaced the waning priesthood and brought forth David, who brought forth Christ—1:1-20, 16:13; 2 Sam. 7:12-14; Matt. 1:1.14.

B. God could motivate Hannah as a person who was one with Him in the line of life; God needs many Hannahs, persons who can bring forth some Samuels to turn the age.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

Apart from the book of Proverbs, the Old Testament does not seem to give us much teaching concerning parenting. In the New Testament, however, Paul wrote something about being parents. Most books in the world teach children how to be children; not many books teach parents how to be parents. Most people pay attention to teachings for children. But the New Testament pays much attention to teachings for parents. It does not pay much attention to teachings about being children. Although it does teach us something about children, the emphasis is not on children. Both Ephesians 6 and Colossians 3 put more emphasis on parents than on children. We should learn to be proper parents because God pays more attention to parents than to children.

If we try to summarize the words in the Bible concerning parenting, the main thing parents should do is nurture their children in the teaching and admonition of the Lord and not provoke them to anger or discourage them. This means that parents must exercise self-control and must not be loose in any way. This is Paul's teaching concerning the subject.

As difficult as it is to be a husband or a wife, I hope you will realize that there is something more difficult—being a parent. Being a husband or a wife involves only two people; being a parent involves more. Being a husband or a wife is a matter of personal happiness; being a parent is something that affects the well-being of the children of the next generation. The responsibility over the future of the children of the next generation is on the shoulders of the parents.

We have to realize how serious this responsibility is. God has placed a person's body, soul, and spirit, even his whole life and future, into our hands. No individual influences another individual's future as much as parents. No one controls a person's future as much as parents. Parents almost have a say in whether their children will go to hell or to heaven. We must learn to be good husbands and good wives, but above all we must learn also to be good parents. I believe that the responsibility of being a parent is more than that of being a husband or a wife.

Here we will consider the Christian way of parenting. The knowledge of this will save us from many headaches.

Sanctifying Oneself for the Sake of the Children

First, all parents must sanctify themselves before God for the sake of their children.

The Lord Sanctifying Himself for the Sake of the Disciples

What does it mean to be sanctified before God? The Lord Jesus said, "For their sake I sanctify Myself" (John 17:19). This does not refer to being holy, but to whether or not one is sanctified. The Lord Jesus is holy and His nature is holy. But for the sake of the disciples, He sanctified Himself. There were many things that He could have done which were not contrary to His own holiness; nevertheless, He refrained from doing them because of weakness in the disciples. In many matters the disciples' weakness directed the Lord and restricted His freedom. The Lord could do many things, but He did not do them because He did not want the disciples to misunderstand or be stumbled. As far as the Lord's nature was concerned, He often could have acted a certain way. But He refrained from doing so for the sake of the disciples.

Not Walking in a Loose Way

Similarly, those who have children should sanctify themselves for the sake of their children. This means that we should refrain from doing many things which we could do for the sake of our children. There are many things which we could say, but for the sake of the children we do not say them. From the day we bring our children into our family, we should sanctify ourselves.

If you do not restrict yourself, you will not be able to restrict your children. The looseness of those who do not have children, at the most, results in trouble for themselves. But for those who have

children, looseness results in damage to their children as well as to themselves. Once a Christian brings a child into the world, he must sanctify himself. Two eyes, sometimes four, are watching you all the time. They will follow you all your life. Even after you have left this world, they will not forget what they have seen in you; the things you do will remain inside of them.

Acting according to Standards

The day your son is born is the day you should consecrate yourself. You must set a standard for yourself in morality, in conduct at home, and in all moral judgments regarding right and wrong. You must set a high standard for what is ideal, and you must also set a standard for yourself in spiritual matters. You must act strictly according to these standards. Otherwise, you will have problems for yourself, and you will spoil your children. Many children are ruined by their own parents, not by outsiders. If parents are lacking in ethical, moral, and spiritual standards, they will ruin their children.

A young person makes decisions and judgments in his future life according to the training he received during his early years with his parents. A child may remember or forget what you say, but what he sees surely will remain in him forever. He develops his sense of judgment from you, and he also develops his system of values from you.

Every parent must remember that his actions will be repeated in his children; his actions will not stop with him. When you do not have children, you can do whatever you like when you are happy and give up and forget about everything when you are unhappy. But once you have children, you have to restrict yourself. You have to act according to the highest standard of conduct whether you like it or not. The whole life of Christian children depends on the behavior of their parents.

I remember a brother who said something when his son got into trouble. He said, "He is just a replica of me and I am just he." When a parent sees something in his children, he must realize that he is seeing himself. He must see that they are his very reflection. They are just reflecting him. Through them he can see himself.

This is why every couple should consecrate themselves anew to God as soon as they have a child. They should come to the Lord and consecrate themselves to Him again. From that time forward, the Lord has committed a human being, with his entire spirit, soul, life, and future, into their hands. From that day forward, they have to be faithful to the Lord's commitment. Some people are committed to a work for one or two years when they sign a contract. But this work lasts for their entire life; there is no limit to the term of this commitment.

The Sense of Being Entrusted

Among believers in China, no failure is greater than the failure of parenting. I think this is due to the influence of paganism. Failure in one's career cannot be compared to failure in parenting. Even failure in being a husband or a wife cannot be compared to failure in parenting. A husband or a wife can protect himself or herself, because both are over twenty years of age. But when a child is placed in your hands, he cannot protect himself. The Lord has entrusted a child to you. You cannot go to Him and say, "You have entrusted five children to me, and I have lost three." You cannot say, "You have entrusted ten to me, and I have lost eight." The church cannot go on if parents do not have a sense of being entrusted. We do not want to see our children being rescued back from the world. Suppose we beget children, lose them to the world, and then try to rescue them back. If we allow this to happen, the gospel will never be preached to the uttermost part of the earth. Our children have been taught many teachings, and we have been taking care of them for years. At least these children should be brought to the Lord. We are wrong if we do not take care of our children. Please remember that it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their children turn out the right way.

Please give me the liberty to say this word. Throughout church history, the greatest failure among Christians is the failure in parenting. This is something no one cares much about. The children are young; they are in your hands and can do nothing much themselves. If you are loose with yourself, you will also be loose with them. We must realize that parents must exercise self-control, sacrificing

their own freedom. God has committed a human body, along with his soul, into our hands. If we do not exercise self-control and give up our freedom, we will have a difficult time answering to our God in the future.

The Need to Walk with God

Second, parents must not only realize their responsibility and sanctify themselves for the sake of their children; they must also walk with God.

One sanctifies himself for the sake of his children. But this does not mean that he can be loose and careless when he is by himself. He should not exercise self-control merely for the sake of his children. The Lord Jesus was not short of holiness in Himself. He did not sanctify Himself just for the sake of His disciples. If the Lord Jesus sanctified Himself merely for the sake of His disciples, but was not holy in Himself, He would have been a total failure. In the same way, parents must sanctify themselves for their children, but they themselves must also walk with God.

No matter how much zeal you show in your children's presence, they can easily see through you if you are not genuinely zealous. They are very clear, but you may not be that clear. You may be a very loose person yet act carefully in their presence. In reality you are not the person you pretend to be. Please remember that your children can see through you easily. If you are a careless person and you try to act in a discreet way before your children, they will easily detect your carelessness and pretension. You must not only sanctify yourself before them for their sake, but you must also be genuinely holy in yourself, walking with God as Enoch did.

I would like to draw your attention to the example of Enoch. Genesis 5:21-22 says, "Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." Before Enoch was sixty-five years old, we do not know his condition. After he begat Methuselah, we know that he walked with God three hundred years. Then he was taken up by God. This is a special case in the Old Testament. Before Enoch begat children, we do not know anything about his condition. But after Enoch begat Methuselah, the Bible says that he walked with God. When the burden of the family was upon him, he started to feel his weakness. He felt that his responsibility was too great and that he could not manage it by himself. So he began to walk with God. He did not walk with God just in the presence of his son; he walked with God even when he was by himself. He felt that if he did not walk with God, he would not know how to raise his children. Enoch begat not only Methuselah but also many other children; nevertheless, he walked with God for three hundred years. His responsibility as a parent did not hinder him from walking with God; rather, it caused him to walk with God. Eventually, he was raptured. Please remember that the first person who was raptured was a father. The first person to be raptured was one who had many children and yet who still walked with God. The way one bears his responsibility in a family is a reflection of his spiritual condition before God.

We must see that in order for us to bring our children to the Lord in a genuine way, we need to be a person who walks with God. We cannot send our children to heaven merely by pointing our fingers to heaven. We have to walk in front of them. Only then can we ask our children to follow us. Even though Christian parents want their children to be better than they are in the hope that their children will not love the world and will go on in a positive way, there are many bad families because the parents themselves draw back. If this is the case, they will never realize their goal no matter how hard they try. We must remember that the standard of the children cannot be higher than the standard of their parents. This does not mean that we should set a false standard. We should have a standard that is genuine and spiritual. If we have this, our children will come up to our standard.

Please forgive me for saying something that sounds simple and elementary. I once went to visit a family and saw the mother beating her child because the child lied. However, both the father and the mother in this family also lied. I learned that they lied on many occasions. But when their child lied, he was beaten. Honestly speaking, the child's real mistake was only a deficiency in his technique of lying; he was caught lying. The only difference between the child and the parents was that one was

caught lying while the others were not. It was not a matter of whether one lied, but a matter of skill. One lied, and he was caught and punished. If you have a double standard, how can you raise your children? How can you tell your children not to lie when you are a liar yourself? You must not have one standard for your life and another standard for your child's life. This will never work. Suppose your children see and receive nothing but lies and dishonesty from you. The more you punish them, the more problems you will have. Some fathers tell their sons, "Wait until you are eighteen, and I will let you smoke." Many children say in their heart, "When I am eighteen, my father will let me lie. I am not yet eighteen, so I cannot lie. But when I am eighteen, I will lie." This pushes your children into the world. You must walk with God as Enoch did, in order to raise your children as Enoch did. If you do not walk with God, you cannot expect to raise your children the way Enoch did.

Please remember that your children will learn to love what you love, and hate what you hate. They will learn to treasure what you treasure, and condemn what you condemn. You must set a moral standard for yourself and your children. Whatever your moral standard is, that will be their standard as well. Your standard of loving the Lord will be their standard of loving the Lord. There can be only one standard in a family, not two.

I know of a family whose father is a nominal Christian. He never goes to church, but he wants his children to go every Sunday. Every Sunday morning, he gives a little money to each of his children and tells them to go to church. The money is for the children to make offerings. Later in the day, he plays a game of mahjong with his three friends. His children, however, spend the money on snack food. They play until the pastor is almost through with his sermon, and then they sneak into the building to hear a verse or two. When they go home, they give their father a nice report. They have snacks, they get to play, and they make a report. This, of course, is an extreme case.

I hope we can see that God has committed our children to us. There can be only one standard in the family. Whatever we forbid our children to do, we should not do. There must never be two standards in a family, one for the children and another for us. We must keep the same standard for our children's sake. We must sanctify ourselves to maintain a standard. Once the standard is set, we must maintain it. I hope we will all take good care of our children. They are constantly watching us. Whether or not they behave well depends on whether we behave well. They are not merely listening to us; they are watching us as well. They seem to know everything. They know if we are pushing them around, and they know if we are acting in front of them. We should not think that we can deceive our children. No! They cannot be deceived. They know how we feel, and they are clear about the true picture. Whatever we demand of our children, we must take the same position in that matter.

After Enoch begat Methuselah, he walked with God three hundred years. What a beautiful picture this is! He begat many children, yet he could walk with God three hundred years. He was a genuine father without any pretense. Such a walk is altogether proper in the eyes of God. (CWWN, vol. 49, "Messages for Building Up New Believers (2)," msg. 33, pp. 519-526)

Study Questions:

1. Why is it important for Christian parents to have a sense of having been entrusted with their children by God?
2. In raising up children unto the Lord, why is the mother more important than the father?
3. How was Hannah able to bear and bring forth a Samuel, an age-turner, for the meeting of God's need?

References and Further Reading:

1. *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 49, "Messages for Building Up New Believers (2)," ch. 33.
2. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1975-1976*, vol. 1, "The Crucial Function of the Sisters in the Church Life."
3. *Life-study of 1 & 2 Samuel*, msg. 2 and 38.

LESSONS FOR THE SISTERS

Lesson 16

Motherhood (2)

God's Ordination Concerning Motherhood and the Function and Love of the Mothers in Raising Up Children unto the Lord

Scripture Reading: Gen. 3:16a; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15; Titus 2:4

I. “To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; / In pain you will bring forth children”—Gen. 3:16a; 1 Tim. 5:14:

- A. The suffering in childbearing includes both pregnancy and delivery; the entire matter of childbearing, including pregnancy and delivery, is a matter of pain.
- B. We all know that childbearing is troublesome, but it was ordained by God as a restriction; the best protection to an unrestricted young woman is to have a number of children; children are a restriction and a protection to their mothers—1 Tim. 5:13-14.
- C. Childbearing and house affairs are a rescue and safeguard to idle busybodies; this is God's ordination to restrict and protect women since the fall—vv. 5:13-14.
- D. “Before a sister is married, she may not have any change regardless of how much others minister to her, but after she marries and has several children, these little ones become the best trainers to her; for this reason I like to see all the young sisters marrying and bringing forth little ‘trainers’”—*The Normal Way of Fruit-Bearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church*, p. 52.

II. “Having been reminded of the unfeigned faith, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded dwells also in you”; “And that from a babe you have known the sacred writings”—2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15:

- A. “Paul says that Timothy knew the Bible since he was a babe. I believe that when Timothy's mother was feeding him, she must have been speaking the Bible to him. The faith in Timothy came from his mother and his grandmother”—*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 5*, p. 163; cf. Deut. 6:2, 7a:
 - 1. In addition to the knowledge of the New Testament, Timothy also had, from his childhood, a good foundation in the knowledge of the Old Testament; he was one who was fully perfected and equipped to minister the word of God, not only in caring for a local church, but also in confronting the increasing decline of the church.
 - 2. Today all the saints in the Lord's recovery, especially the young people, need the understanding of the Word of God, an understanding of both the Old Testament and the New Testament.
- B. The Bible does not emphasize spiritual education in schools; it emphasizes the homes; this refers mainly to the education rendered by mothers—cf. Prov. 1:8b; 6:20b:
 - 1. Young sisters who are fourteen or fifteen years old will one day be mothers and wives; the best equipping to prepare yourselves to be mothers and wives is the spiritual education—2 Tim. 3:15-16.
 - 2. Mary's poetic praise is composed of many quotations from the Old Testament; this indicates that she was a godly woman, qualified to be a channel of the Savior's incarnation; it also indicates that the Lord Jesus would grow up in a family which would be filled with the knowledge and love of God's holy Word—Luke 1:46-56:
 - a. Although Mary was a young woman, she was very knowledgeable concerning the Old Testament and could quote verses from it in her praise to God.
 - b. This proves that although Mary had never gone to a seminary, she was very familiar with the Old Testament; no wonder God chose her to be the mother of

Jesus.

- C. Before the church will be rich, there must be grandmothers like Lois and mothers like Eunice who raise, edify, and nurture their children in the discipline of the Lord; if there are no such people, the church will never be rich.

III. “Train the young women...to love their children”—Titus 2:4; cf. Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 22:6, 15; 29:15, 17:

- A. In a father’s treatment of his children, the Bible emphasizes not provoking them to anger and nurturing them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4); in a mother’s treatment, however, the emphasis is on love; mothers can never be successful if they do not love their children.
- B. If a family does not have a mother’s love, it can never be a good family; without a mother’s love, a family is crippled.
- C. Therefore, the young sisters who are mothers must learn to love their children—Titus 2:4:
 - 1. Our love should not be a natural love, but a love in resurrection—1 Cor. 16:24; 12:15:
 - a. Every parent has some partial love; if you have several children, you will love one of them more than the others according to your taste, and all the children will know who is the object of your partial love—Gen. 25:28; 37:3-4.
 - b. This partial love is not according to our spirit; it is according to our natural taste; we love a particular boy or girl because he or she suits our natural taste; this is the natural life—Gen. 25:27-28.
 - c. Natural love is like honey; instead of a “honey” love, we need a love that is in resurrection, a love that has been killed by the cross and resurrected with the divine life; there is no honey in such a love—Lev. 2:11.
 - 2. The more we deny the self, the more we are in resurrection; the more we forsake our own love, the more we will love others; formerly, our love was low and limited, but our love in resurrection is heavenly and unlimited—Phil. 3:10-11; Rom. 6:5; 2 Cor. 4:10-12; Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 16:24; 2 Cor. 12:15; John 3:16; 1 John 4:16-17.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

The Discipline of Man by Suffering

As we have seen, after man fell God did not come to condemn him, but to seek him and to judge the serpent. In His condemnation on the serpent God proclaimed the promise regarding the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). However, that was not the end. Although God had proclaimed the promise of His salvation, man still remained in a troubled situation. Not only was man in a difficult situation, but a sinful element had been injected into his nature. Therefore, man is both sinful outwardly and also corrupted inwardly. God had no intention of condemning man. All that God had in His heart toward man was love, and man was fully under God's loving care. Thus, God ordained some suffering for man's benefit. Although we do not like suffering, God has ordained it nonetheless.

The Purpose

What is the purpose of the sufferings ordained by God? The primary purpose is to restrict man. The sufferings appointed by God are actually our security and protection. Never forget that as a result of the fall man has a corrupted and corrupting element in his nature. God loves man and exercises a loving concern over him, but man still has a satanic element in his nature. Immediately after the fall man probably did not realize his true condition; however, God understood the problem and thus He ordained sufferings for the purpose of restricting fallen man. Young people throughout the world want freedom; they desire to have their liberty. Nevertheless, we must realize that too much freedom removes the restrictions that God, in His love, has placed upon us. As fallen men with a corrupted nature, we definitely need restrictions as a protection and safeguard. Suppose a mother has a naughty boy. If she does not exercise any restrictions over him, that child would not live for three days. He would kill himself as a result of having too much freedom. No mother is so foolish as to give complete liberty to a naughty child. All children need restrictions. Restrictions are good for us.

As an older person I need to be and I love to be restricted by my dear brothers in the Lord. I am restricted even more by the sisters. Actually I have very little freedom. If you were to offer me freedom, I would say, "No thank you. You take your freedom home with you. I need restriction." How I thank the Lord that in all the past years I have been protected by restrictions. I have not suffered under the restriction of the saints, but have rather enjoyed it. All the limitations rendered to me by my brothers and sisters in the Lord have been my protection. Although, at present, you may not think that restrictions are pleasant, after the passing of years I believe that you will worship the Lord and say, "Thank the Lord for restrictions!"

Let me say a word about husbands and wives. No woman likes to be restricted. The dear sisters may be holy and seek after spirituality, but I do not believe that they are fond of being restricted. A wife does not like to accept any restraint from her husband or mother-in-law. I have learned from history and from experience that not many daughters-in-law like their mothers-in-law. It seems that this comes from God's ordination. God ordained that the mother-in-law be a restriction to the daughter-in-law and that the daughter-in-law be a problem to the mother-in-law. Humanly speaking, this does not sound pleasant, but actually it is good. Any sister who is willing to accept restrictions from her husband, children, and mother-in-law will be protected.

Now I turn to the husbands. We brothers certainly need the restrictions that come from our wives. I thank the Lord for my dear wife. I can testify that the best help which she has given me has been her restrictions. She even restricts my eating. Although my stomach belongs to me, she determines how much I eat. Day after day I tell her, "I'm still hungry," but she answers, "It is sufficient. There is no more." Eventually, however, as a result of accepting her limitations, my stomach trouble was cured. I have learned that if you have stomach trouble or a stomach ulcer the best way to deal with it is to be restricted in your eating. Thus, any restriction is truly a great help. We all need restrictions.

Therefore, God ordained suffering to man to restrict him, to rescue him by discipline, and to guard him.

Concerning the Woman

Suffering in Childbearing

Concerning the woman, God has ordained suffering or pain in childbearing (Gen. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:15). The suffering in childbearing includes both pregnancy and delivery. The entire matter of childbearing, including pregnancy and delivery, is a matter of pain. It was not originally destined this way by God before the fall; however, due to the fall God ordained a portion of suffering for the woman, the leader in the fall. You may ask why God ordained suffering firstly to the woman and secondly to the man. God did this because the woman took the lead in transgressing God's prohibition. Thus, God came to her first. That was fair. If God had gone to Adam, Adam would have said, "Lord, don't come to me. I was not the leader in the fall. You must go to the leader." Thus, God came to Eve first.

Why do some women limit their childbearing? Because they want to enjoy a free life. That is against God's way. We all know that childbearing is troublesome, but it was ordained by God as a restriction. The best protection to an unrestricted young woman is to have a number of children. Although neither the woman's parents, husband, nor in-laws can restrict her, as long as she has some children these children will limit her undue freedom. Children are a restriction and a protection to their mothers. Thus, Paul wanted the young women to marry and bear children that they might not be idle or busybodies (1 Tim. 5:13-14).

The Ruling of the Husband

The Lord also told Eve that her husband shall rule over her. According to this word, every sister should be under the rule of her husband. Why did Eve fall? Because she did not care for her husband and assumed his headship. Therefore, God seemed to say to her, "Eve, from now on I appoint Adam to rule over you." Although this is a difficult word to accept, the Bible tells us that a woman must be ruled by her husband. We all must take this word as a security and protection. The ruling of the husband is a genuine safeguard to the wife. Hence, in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 Paul says, "Let a woman learn in quietness in all subjection; but I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man." Paul's teaching on this matter is based upon God's ordination in Genesis 3:16. I hope that the sisters will take heed to this divine word of the Bible. (*Life-study of Genesis*, msg. 21, pp. 271-274)

THE PRAISE OF THE MAN-SAVIOR'S MOTHER

In [Luke]1:46-56 we have the praise of the Man-Savior's mother. Mary came to visit Elizabeth. When Elizabeth saw Mary, she blessed her. Mary responded to this blessing not by giving a blessing, but by offering praise to God.

Full of Quotations from the Old Testament

Mary's poetic praise is composed of many quotations from the Old Testament. This indicates that she was a godly woman, qualified to be a channel for the Savior's incarnation. It also indicates that the Lord Jesus would grow up in a family which would be filled with the knowledge and love of God's holy Word.

Although Mary was a young woman, she was very knowledgeable concerning the Old Testament and could quote verses from it in her praise to God. Actually, her praise was a composition of quotations from the Scriptures. Surely she was the right person for God to use in conceiving the Savior who was to be born.

Before Mary was visited by the angel to receive the word concerning the conception of the Man-Savior, she was already full of the knowledge of God's Word. Many verses of the Scriptures had been absorbed into her being. Therefore, at the proper time she could pour out what was within her as she offered up praise to God.

Mary's praise indicates that in order for us to be used by God, we need to have certain

qualifications. One qualification is the proper knowledge of the Word of God. I hope that the young people in particular will learn of Mary in this matter. Do you intend to be used by the Lord to bring forth something of the Lord, even, in a spiritual sense, to “conceive” the Lord Jesus and bring Him forth? If so, then you need to be qualified by being filled with the Scriptures, filled with the Word of God. (*Life-study of Luke*, msg. 4, pp. 33-34)

We must be very clear that the church is the pillar and the base of the truth. Hence, the church meeting is a place where we come to learn the truth. In Taiwan, the standard of education is very high; education is also becoming very widespread. This is a worldwide trend. But before God we also need to receive our spiritual education. The church is here to uphold the truth. All the saved ones must come here to receive the proper spiritual education. Even people in the world know that without education a man is wild and unlearned. Once a person has received some education, his behavior will be changed.

We, the saved ones, should always remember that not only do we need God, but we also need to have a clear knowledge of the Bible. You young sisters who are fourteen or fifteen years old will one day be mothers and wives. The best equipping to prepare yourselves to be mothers and wives is the spiritual education.

I always consider that there must have been some reason that God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus. When Mary was found to be with child, she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. In Luke chapter one Mary had a psalm of praise to God. That whole psalm was a quotation from the Old Testament. This proves that although Mary had never gone to a seminary, she was very familiar with the Old Testament. No wonder God chose her to be the mother of Jesus. Hence, we must see that Christians need to receive two kinds of education. Not only do they need to receive the worldly education; they must also receive the spiritual education. God’s education is a truth education. We must all learn the truth. (*CWWL*, 1985, vol. 4, “Key Points on the Home Meetings,” ch. 6, p. 450)

“TRAIN THE YOUNG WOMEN...TO LOVE THEIR CHILDREN”

In a father’s treatment of his children, the Bible emphasizes not provoking them to anger and nurturing them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. In a mother’s treatment, however, the emphasis is on love. Mothers can never be successful if they do not love their children. If a family does not have a mother’s love, it can never be a good family. Without a mother’s love, a family is crippled. Therefore, the young sisters who are mothers must learn to love their children. (*CWWL*, 1932-1949, vol. 3, “Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, vol. 3,” ch. 33, pp. 615-616)

Study Questions:

1. What is God’s ordination concerning child-bearing?
2. What is the best way for the young sisters to equip themselves to be good wives and mothers?
3. What is the Bible’s emphasis concerning the mother’s treatment of her children?

References and Further Reading:

1. *Life-study of Genesis*, msg. 21.
2. *Life-study of 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, msgs. 9 and 18.
3. *Life-study of Luke*, msg. 4.
4. *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 49, “Messages for Building Up New Believers (2),” ch. 33.
5. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1932-1949*, vol. 3, “Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, vol. 3,” ch. 33.