

Keeping the Hearts of Your Children

by Ann Brubaker

As mothers, we have a tremendous impact on our children's hearts and lives, and it's our responsibility to have and keep their hearts, shape their will into a yielded attitude to God, and give them a lifetime of protection.

Duration: 1:22:18

Scripture: Psalm 23:1, Proverbs 22:6, Proverbs 29:15, Proverbs 29:17, Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 6:1, Colossians 3:20

Topics: "Godly Home"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker explores the importance of building relationships and communicating love to children. The speaker uses the example of a child named Johnny to illustrate different scenarios. The speaker emphasizes the need for quality time and one-on-one interactions with children, as this is how they feel loved. The sermon also highlights the significance of creating a controlled and orderly atmosphere where children feel confident and secure.

Transcript

Hold him while he's little, he won't be little long. For all too soon will come the day, he won't be mama's song. For cuddling on the rocking chair, he's joined the busy throng.

So, hold him while he's little, he won't be little long. Guide him while he's little, and show him how to be. A good, obedient little boy, why not obsessed with me? Then you will find in years to come, a blessing he will be.

So, guide him while he's little, and show him how to be. Love him while he's little, he needs your touch of grace. He needs the comfort you can give, in just a sweet embrace.

Thoughts of mom will bring him back, with a smile upon his face. So, love him while he's little, he needs your touch of grace. Teach him while he's little, to love the Bible true.

For it has all the answers, to what he needs to do. To make his life fulfilling, and keep it then in view. So, teach him while he's little, to love the Bible true.

Hold him, guide him, love him, he'll soon be grown, you'll see. Teach him while he's still a small, and sitting on your knee. For if you do these while he's small, just for eternity.

So, hold him, guide him, love him, he'll soon be grown, you'll see. Hold him, guide him, love him, he won't be little long. And Lord, I just ask you that you would help me this evening to share these passionate thoughts that I feel in a compassionate way.

Lord, I'm pleading for wisdom, I'm pleading for humility. Give me a soft and a tender heart, Lord. And I pray for every heart sitting here, that you would help it to be open, Lord.

I don't want to lift up anything but your will. Father, please, I just ask you, speak through me this evening, and speak to each one of these mothers. Father, we hold in our laps, in our hearts, in our homes, the future body of Christ.

It's not a little thing, Father, and so help us this evening that somehow we could go home with something that will encourage us on. That in the end, you get the glory that you deserve from every one of these little souls, Father. I ask it for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Probably the biggest thing I tremble about this evening is the fact that sitting out here are sisters from so many different perspectives. If I was sharing this with a bunch of our Ultramarine Baptist sisters, I would know exactly what every one of you think, how you've been raised.

That would be easier. But you have come from lots of different backgrounds. You've come from hurting homes.

You've maybe come from abuse. You've maybe come from anger. Maybe you've come from a solid sweet home.

So I tremble a little bit. What I say comes from the passion in my heart that as mothers we fill the place God calls us to. But I realize I don't know how what I say sounds to you.

So I'm asking you to have grace, I guess. I really do want to share what I share, and I do share it in love. But I guess I'm just asking you to please have grace for me.

Please. I am going to share a lot of information tonight. But I don't want you to feel overwhelmed with it.

It's just a whole lot of thoughts and things that we have gleaned from some years of experience, from the Word of God, from asking our children why they are who they are. And so all of it may sound like a lot. But the bottom line is what I want to impress on us tonight is as mothers we have a tremendous impact on the entire atmosphere in our home.

And that atmosphere has a tremendous impact on our children. So lots of things all coming together. And in the end I want to try to give a couple word pictures to maybe try to put this into perspective of the effect we have.

We want to look at first what it means to have and keep our children's hearts. Then why it is so important that we have and keep our children's hearts. And then some just practical ways that we can go about that.

I can't make this all conclusive. I know we all know that and I couldn't anyway. Please understand me.

We have not done this all right. Any of you that know anything about our past know that through our children's most formative years our home was dysfunctional. Literally.

So let that give you courage. Our children are all born again. We do have their hearts.

And let that give you the courage to believe that you don't have to do it all right. We are living testimony to that. Your home doesn't have to be perfect.

God is very able and God is very faithful. What we do have to do though is search his word. Do what we can with our whole hearts.

He will fill in the gap. I promise. So don't be discouraged by the high standard that I want to lift up tonight.

I believe it's biblical. We can't do it on our own. But God with by his Holy Spirit through us and with his helping us he can.

There is hope. You have reason to have a living hope about having every one of your children's hearts close to your own in working for the Lord. What he asks us to do he does give us the power to do.

There's no question. So let's look a little bit at what it means to have our children's hearts. We hear it all the time.

We need to keep their hearts. We need to have their hearts. What does it mean? I use the word keep tonight mostly because when we have a baby we have its heart.

Babies love their mothers. Children love mothers that abuse them. I don't understand that but it's the connection between a mother's heart and a baby's heart.

So we have that heart. What we're going to do is keep it. Because we do for a short season there before that will really begins to exert itself.

We want to keep it. If you have not kept your children's hearts these same principles are still going to apply to win them back. I want to make this as simple as I can.

A definition of what it means to have your child's heart. The bottom line is it means they love your authority. Not just submit to it.

Not just tolerate it. But they love it. In a very young child it means that you have disciplined lovingly and consistently so they have a proper type of fear for you and obey you.

Then as they get a little older it means that they do what you ask them to even when you're not around. When that happens you know you have that child's heart. They're wanting to please you even when you're not there right over them.

The best way to measure whether you have your child's heart is do they respect other authority? If I ask your child to do something do they willingly do it? That is a heart that is yielded to authority. That's what we're after. To have your child's heart means that their will is submitted to your will.

Obviously this comes gradually. It's not something that's going to happen overnight and they're going to grow in this. In older children then it comes out and they have no desire for anything except what you desire for them.

Simply that Mickey has been heard to say, Daddy's word is like God to me. That's because whatever Daddy says he wants. Not just has to do but wants.

You know Jenny told us years back, Don't even bring a young man to me unless you bless it. Young men were coming and going and she didn't even want to know it. And she doesn't know it.

And now she's free from having to know that. Who asked for her because she didn't want it. And she knew when we handed her Marvin's letter that it came with a blessing or she wouldn't be having it.

So that's having their heart. That's the picture of what it means to have your child's heart. They want nothing but what you want for them.

There's no resistance. They love that authority. No resistance to you.

Secure in whatever you say. Totally trusting you. Loving your will for them.

Okay we're going to talk about how to accomplish that a little later. But this is what it means when we say we want to have and keep our children's hearts. What we're after is a child that loves to do exactly what we tell them to do.

And they grow up feeling like that inside your will is a sweet place. It's a safe place. It's not a have to.

They're thankful for it. They choose it. They love it.

Okay that's what we're after. Okay at the end we're going to have an open time to share. But right now my question is am I clear? Is anybody thinking what do you mean by have their hearts? Still.

Okay. So that's what we're after. That's our goal.

When you look at that little tiny baby and you know someday they're going to be an 18-year-old, that's your goal. Why? Why do we want that? Why is it important to keep that heart? For one thing it's because you can save them from so much trouble. Just imagine yourself.

What if I had given that to my daddy? What if that was my heart when I got married? What if I could have just rolled that right over into Mark? I'd be talking about reverencing my husband right now instead of this. Because I wouldn't have the struggles I have occasionally when my will still rises up. So we can save them from a lot of scars and baggage.

That's a big one. That's one good reason to keep their hearts. But there's an even bigger one.

And that is because someday God is going to call that child's name. And what you do between now and then is going to make a difference in whether that child says, Yes, Lord? What will you have me to do? Just like that. We're striving for that kind of response to us so that God gets that kind of response when he calls.

That's the ultimate goal. Think of that definition that I gave. Listen to these things thinking about your child responding to God this way.

No resistance. Secure in whatever he says. Totally trusting.

Loving his will. Isn't that what we want them to give to God? So then that's what we're after. To shape that little sinner's will into this kind of an attitude.

So that when God calls, they say, Yes, Lord. On the contrary, think about, can you imagine a willful, stubborn, negative, haughty child when the Lord calls? Saying, Yes, Lord. Whatever you say, Lord.

It doesn't come together. This is why God calls us to this calling. That is a lifetime of protection that we can give our children.

It's a wonderful gift that we can do for them. Am I clear on why? Any questions about that? So we see what it means and we see why. This is a thorough yieldedness we're talking about here.

I'm going to write some things up here. Let me ask you something. Think about yourself and your willingness to give this kind of a yieldedness to someone.

Would you yield yourself that thoroughly to someone that you didn't trust? It's not likely. So your children must trust you. Would you yield yourself that thoroughly, give your heart to someone you don't have any respect for? Probably not.

So your children must respect you. Would you be willing to give your heart that completely to someone that you didn't think loved you? Would you just be willing to just be that completely sold out to someone who really had no love for you? I doubt it. They must know that you love them.

Do you think you could build a good relationship with somebody? That kind of... Okay, I'm sorry. Do you think you could give your heart to somebody that you hadn't built a good relationship with? You know, you've got this individual out here. You have no relationship with John Doe.

Are you going to go give your heart to him in a yielded way? Obviously not. You must have a relationship with your children. And lastly, are you going to give your heart to someone that you've never communicated with? Or that you have no flow of communication with? It's not likely.

There must be communication with your children before they're going to give you their heart. That looks like quite a list, doesn't it? They must trust you. They must respect you.

They must know that you love them. You must have a relationship with them. And there must be communication between you before they're ever going to give you their heart.

So how do we make it happen? That's the question. Okay, number one, they must see what it means. Through example.

You know, I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day. So sisters, if you haven't yielded your heart to your husband, you really can't expect your children to yield their heart to you. If my heart isn't wholly given over to the Lord and then my husband, they won't see this example of this yielded heart that we're striving to work into them.

If you're not in that place, I beg you, get there. Go into your closet, fast, pray, get counsel, whatever it takes to come to a place where you have a right to ask your children for that. We must be a walking, living example of a yielded heart.

That is going to make a tremendous difference in the atmosphere that comes out of my life, that permeates my home. That's very important, which is why we should have talked about reverencing our husbands first. I feel like I'm talking to a group of born-again ladies here, and your relationships with the Lord, obviously, is first, and then with our husbands, to be this walking example of what we need to be to

our children.

Okay, we're going to talk about the importance of our vision, the importance of obedience, the importance of quality time, and then prayer. Think about having a vision, and I'll cover these again, but if we have a vision, that is going to help our children trust us and respect us. If we have their obedience, it's going to help them trust us, it's going to help them respect us, they're going to feel our love, and it's going to build relationship.

If we know about quality time, we give them quality time, it's going to affect every single one of them. Think of a child in time. It helps them trust you.

It helps them respect you. They feel loved. It builds relationships.

You're communicating. And then, obviously, we must bathe it all in prayer. These are all vital.

I'm not going to be able to be comprehensive on them, obviously, but I'm just talking about these kind of things that are going to build an atmosphere in your home that is going to invite your children to continue to give you their hearts. During those dysfunctional years in our home, I do believe there was a continuity, and that was while we were doing a lot of flopping around, and Daddy and I's relationship was not sweet, there still was a continuity of these things that carried on. My vision didn't change.

The way we trained obedience didn't change. Time actually increased, probably my time with them. So you don't need to struggle.

If you feel like you're failing, if you feel like things aren't right in your home, you can live out these things and make this atmosphere. I know when Laura was sharing her testimony with us, their family's testimony is a testimony of lots of moving and changing churches and leaving friends behind. And I asked her, So Laura, why did you all still maintain a respect for your Daddy? And she said, He maintained his vision for the family.

Mama still mothered us consistently the same way. So we can do that. So the first thing I'm going to look at is vision.

And I want to clarify this. I'm not talking about the vision that is the direction of our family. That's Daddy's business.

That's husband's. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about what it means to you to be a mama.

Your vision as a mother and how you do it. I have some questions, and I want you to think about these. Are you glad you're a woman? Are you really glad that you're a woman and not a man? Are you content to be a woman? If you're a mother here, do you like being a mother? Do you like your children? Now, I know all mothers love their children.

But do you like the fact that I'm a mother, and I get children, and I like them? I like to be with them. I'd rather be with them rather than anywhere else. Do you like being a woman and a mother? Do you like serving in your home? These things are all imperative.

If you are going to have an atmosphere in your home that invites your children to give you their hearts, you're going to hear the word atmosphere a lot this evening. And at the end, again, I said with my word pictures, maybe you'll catch on to know what I've been trying to say. Again, if you don't love to be a

woman, if you don't love to be a mother, if you don't like your children, I beg of you, go to your closet and get there.

You must. It's not going to come out right if you don't. Your vision for your children must be graced with a pure heart of positive contentment with your calling to be a woman and to be a mother.

If there's any struggle in your heart with those things, get help. Do something about it because it's going to hinder the atmosphere in your home. It matters how we mother.

The Bible says without a vision, the people perish. And mothers without a vision, our children are going to perish. If we have no vision, we're going to flop through the days.

Mothering is not a just wing it and hope for the best situation. I can promise you with that kind of a mindset, it won't work out right. Children are born with a nature to sin.

And they're going to walk in sin if we don't direct them differently. So we must have a vision for our children. You'll just live day by day and they'll just sort of grow up.

If we don't have a vision, it's important that you have set before you what you want these children to become. And to me, the sweetest vision that we can get a hold of tonight is the holy trust that it is to be a mother. This is not happenstance.

This is not that training children is just a give it a try and I don't have any control over it. Some children turn out alright and some don't. That is not the truth.

Don't let anybody convince you of that. God has provided truth. He has provided the Holy Spirit to make it possible.

And I believe it's possible for every parent and every child to receive blessing, not cursing. It's a promise in the word. We need to remember, mothers, that we're not preparing these children for their future.

The world does that. We are preparing these children for eternity. We're not just controlling them.

We're implanting principles, God's principles, into their lives so that when we're no longer spanking, we're no longer there to guide, they've yielded to God and they walk on in those same principles. God has prepared you and gifted you with his most prized creation when he gives you a baby. Janet, can I have your baby? Oh, you're nursing.

I'm sorry. Can I hold her just a little bit? I don't want to make her unhappy. Kesey is getting her diaper changed so she's not, oh, this is not making her happy.

I like to picture a conversation with God when he hands us a baby. Just imagine God saying, Janet, you know, Christy, Becca, Diana, here's one of my most precious creations. She's mine.

I'm just loaning her to you for a little while. And I'm going to give her to you for just a little while. She's still mine, Mama.

I want her back. Someday, I'm going to call this baby's name. And what you do with her from now until I give you a call of her name is going to make a whole difference in whether she's going to come back to me.

And then he hands us a baby. She just spits up. Okay, so they're only loaned to us.

They're not even ours, Sarah. If you get a baby in your arms, it's God's. He says, I want him back.

Someday, I'm going to call his name. I'm going to call her name. What you do with the instructions I've given you between now and then is going to make all the difference in this little soul for eternity.

And then God leaves us with this eternal soul. That's a pretty incredible task for God to entrust us with, isn't it? Keep this vision before you. I am preparing a soul for eternity.

I'm not just getting through days. I'm not just controlling. I'm not just hoping they'll turn out right.

I am preparing an eternal soul. That's sobering. But that's very, very real.

Mamas, I think if you'll keep that vision before you, you're not apt to do that carelessly. It's not a matter of how fun it is to have babies. It's about souls for either God or the enemy.

This is the vision that if we can keep before our eyes, we will do carefully. Solomon, the wisest man on all the earth, one time said, My son, give me thine heart and let thine eyes observe my ways. That tells me it's not haughty for me to expect my child to give me their heart.

It's right. It's what God says. And he says observing my ways is supposed to be okay too.

That makes our ways pretty serious. How I live, how I talk, how I share is going to impact how they turn out. You must have a vision for your child for what you want them to become.

And then establish an atmosphere in your home that helps them come to that. I remember one time Mick had been away for a little while and he'd come home and he said, I'm always anxious to get back home. I want to become what you and Daddy want me to become.

And I need to be in your atmosphere to grow that way. Our atmosphere is who we are, mamas. It makes a difference.

We're not raising flocks of chickens. We're raising children. And we have to put way more care in it.

There's an eternal purpose here. We are keeping these hearts for a holy reason. Not to look good in other people's eyes.

God forbid that we should ever strive for that. Not to make our lives easier. Not just so they're not a hassle.

But keep that vision before you. That you're raising a soul for either heaven or hell. That puts purpose in the way you live your life.

Okay, why is a vision going to affect respect and trust? I think probably vision affects those two the most. And I'm going to say some words here that may make you shudder. Maybe you were not raised in an orderly home.

So words like order and discipline. Continuity. Stability.

Quietness. Goals. Purpose.

Accomplishment. Maybe those look pretty overwhelming to you. But if they are, let me encourage you.

Get a vision for these things. What they do is give a child confidence. And when a child has confidence, they have something they can trust.

When they have confidence in you, they have something they can respect. And remember, those things are necessary. You didn't want to give your hearts to someone you couldn't trust or respect.

And neither do our children. Children must feel safe in our home. They must feel protected.

They want an authority. Without it, their spirits get out of control. So we need to give them that.

You probably feel like you talk all day long. But the fact is, your children are going to forget most of what you say. You know, they may remember a thing or two.

You probably all have your, oh, I remember mom always said thing. But for the most part, they are going to forget all those words you said to them in all those years. But they're not going to forget the atmosphere that you created and that you raised them up in.

We do our children a tremendous favor when order, continuity, calmness are a part of our lives. When we're in control, they feel safe. When they feel safe, they can trust us.

When they can trust us, they'll give us their hearts. You see how it all works together. Picture a mama that is always in a panic.

You know, is that going to make the child want to give the heart? Picture a home that's always in a turmoil. Is that going to make the child feel safe and protected? So it's important. Picture the difference in a mama who's always singing or a mama who's always scolding.

Picture the difference in a mama who is reverencing her husband and a mama who's always reviling her husband. It makes a different atmosphere and it's going to make a difference in whether our children will trust us and give us their hearts. So, vision.

We've got to get a vision. Two things. Of the holy trust that it is.

How serious it is. Why it's so important that we have our children's hearts. Someday, God is going to call that baby's name.

Will they say, yes Lord? Whatever you want. Anytime. Any cost.

Yes Lord? That's what we want to get from our children towards us. And the other vision is stability. Quietness.

Soberness. Order. Create an atmosphere that makes your child feel safe and secure and confident.

Okay, let's go into obedience. Why is obedience so important? Proverbs is full of it. Proverbs gives us lots of instruction.

It's one of the Ten Commandments. Honor your father and mother. It's repeated in the New Testament.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord. It must be important. We all have seen the flagrant disrespect of children who are out of control.

And we know that what happens is then you have frustrated parents and you have children who won't even accept the standards that their parents tried to give them when they grow up. Our children are sinners. I will never forget the first time we went to see Ethan.

First grandbaby, you know. This is a little angel. This little baby.

And Jason's looking at him and he goes, you little sinner. I thought that was awful. But it's the truth and that was a wise papa.

This is a little sinner. And without any direction, they're going to stay a little sinner. It shows up early.

And all of you mamas know it. You probably remember better than I do. Four, five months.

And all of a sudden that cry that used to just be hungry now sounds mad. Or it's taking a little too long to get ready to nurse and the back arches. That can happen at five months.

You know, you're changing a diaper and they want to roll over. You roll them back and suddenly they realize something's happened. And they try again.

It's the will. It's time to start. As soon as that will shows itself, either that child's in control or you're in control.

Respect is gained. Remember, we want respect. Respect is gained through proper training of obedience.

It is a basic principle that children don't accept instruction from people they don't respect. If you're wondering about whether you really have your child's heart, watch how they respect another authority. You know, anyone of us here could tell us in a minute whether a child's heart is yielded to his parents.

Let me give a picture of, let's say, Sunday morning. We're gathering for church and all of a sudden here comes two little people tearing between the chairs. And so I just step in front of the end and I put my hand on the shoulder.

Okay, there may be a child who will look up at me and that excited look is still on their face. And they try to wriggle out from under my hand and try to push past. I know there's still work to be done.

Because if you have that child's heart and I put my hand firmly on their shoulder, they're going to stop. And that smile's going to disappear. And there's going to come proper fear on their face.

And they're going to go soft. And all I'm going to need to say is sweetly, we don't want to run in God's house. And they'll probably make a beeline to their mama and slip their hand in their mama.

You have that child's heart. Maybe you have that. But another thing you can do, and I can't get into a lot of how-tos here.

That could be another whole meeting. But something you can do to bless your children and helping them learn to respect other's authority is use an authority to help you train. We don't mind.

We've done it. Say you come to our house. You know, our children do it.

But you come to our house, and you walk up the steps, and your child's sort of had an attitude in the van all the way. And they step in the door, and Brother Mark goes, well, hello, Sammy. And he goes, you

know, shoulder goes up, and his face goes in your lap.

Now, maybe you have a shy child, and that's different. But you know it's an attitude. Don't ignore it.

Look at Mark and say, can you help me? He'll say, sure. You know, get down there at eye level. This is not a time, if you know your child's will is popping out.

This is not the time to be going, honey, now you need to shake Brother Mark's hand. Your child's in control. You're not.

Down on their level, look them in the eye, loving, firm voice. I want you to shake Brother Mark's hand. Then give them their chance.

If they don't obey, you may use our wooden spoon, and you may use our bathroom, and we'll wait. And you can come back, and they're happy again and understand, and you can get down on their level, and you can say, now I want you to shake Brother Mark's hand. And we can do that four or five times if we need to.

Until they have found out, you know, I need to respect all authority everywhere. Or, you know, this one is a little hard, but we've done it too. Say I've asked little Stevie to do something, and you see he just disrespected me.

I will do it again for you if you want me to, with you watching and you punishing. I'm not going to do the spanking. So, you know, we'll help each other.

Let's do that for each other. Remember, it's not about just well-behaved children. It's about a soul that you want yielded to you.

It's important. If in the end they learn to obey and learn respect, it's well worth it. We only have one chance with each child.

God has given us what we need. Proverbs 29.15 says, A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. That's pretty clear.

That's what the Bible says. Verse 17 says, Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest. Yea, he shall give delight unto your soul.

So we can see that it makes a difference what we do. I think it's clear that parents can experience blessing or will experience cursing. If we obey God's word or if we fail to obey God's word.

So obedience is a big one. It's an important part of having their hearts because when they obey that means their will is broken. And that's what we want.

That sinner will has to learn to yield. A broken will means they're loving your authority. That means a sweetly flowing relationship comes in obedience.

Keep in mind, you're training obedience. So this child says, yes Lord? Right away. God may have mercy on your child and call twice or three times.

But he may not. For that reason the definition of obedience is first time, every time, cheerfully, thoroughly. This is obedience.

Now obviously you don't get that right off. Those are graduating steps that are to be gained as the child gets older. But a little bit of disobedience is not obedience at all.

And that's something that I think we forget because we get used to it. Our hands are full. We're busy.

And we get this feeling that well, I had to tell him three times at least he obeyed. No he didn't. He was in control.

You were not. And when an under authority is in control of the authority, there's not going to be any respect. Does that make sense? I think that's very important.

Imagine, okay, let's say we think, well, I asked twice and they went and did it grumpy, but at least they did it. He obeyed me. What if I came up to you some morning and you said, Sister Ann, how are you doing? And I said, oh, I'm all right I guess.

I've just been really asking the Lord to, I've been having a lot of back pain, and I've just been asking the Lord to show me what I can do about it. And the other day as I was praying, the Lord showed me I need to walk. Just take a walk every day.

And I hate to walk. We live on a hill. It's just a sidewalk and the houses are all right out there.

I hate to walk, but I can walk on our driveway a little. I'll try that. What would you think? I would hope you would love me enough to say, Ann, please.

That's not obedience just because I walked, and you all know that. So when you ask your child to, Sarah, please shut the door. And they go to the corner of the room, and you say, Johnny, please come back and shut the door.

They turn around and look at you and grin, and you say, come and shut that door now. And they do. Is that obedience? No, it's no different.

And if we train our children to obey that way, that's the way to obey the Lord. Do we really want to train children who spend their lives chasing God's will? You know, maybe they say, yes, Lord, but all their lives, their Christian life is a grind. We don't want to do that.

And we can. We all know that. We can train our children to wait until we've told them three times.

We can train that into them. We can train them to wait until we've raised our voice, or until we've got angry, or until we've threatened, or until we've offered a reward, or any of the numerous things that we do. We're training them that way.

Is it as easy to train them to obey the first time? No, because that takes more will breaking. But God never said it was going to be easy. To get a sinner to turn into a soldier is not easy.

So let's don't look at it as two hard sisters. Remember, it's a soul for eternity. Remember, a little tiny bit of disobedience is not obedience at all.

If that's what's happening, they have control of you. You don't have control of them. And they really don't have to respect that.

First time, every time, cheerfully, thoroughly. You start very young with first time. That's your first goal.

That's the first thing you can train, that they obey the first time. Then you work on every time. Then you work on the cheerfully.

Perhaps your children obey you, but they do it kind of begrudgingly, or haltingly. That's not obedience either. If you see that, if you have obedience, now it's time to work on attitude.

So that you get a cheerful obedience. And then you want thorough. Think about what if God calls your child and he's used to telling you, Just a minute, Mommy.

And you're used to letting him do that. Do you want your child, when they say, Johnny? And your child goes, Just a minute, Lord. He may wait a minute.

He may not. We can't risk it. You are forming them for their future spiritual responses.

This is the vision we have to keep in mind. You are not disciplining to relieve your feelings. And Mamas, if you ever find yourself arguing with your children, stop immediately.

A child does not have to respect an authority that will argue with it. If you're arguing, he's in control. You know, lots of times as parents, we get embarrassed of our children's behavior.

Guess what? They're just sinners. They're just acting like sinners. If I'm embarrassed, I better be embarrassed for the fruit of my training.

So don't get frustrated the way your children act. You know, go home and take a look at your own training procedures. Get frustrated at yourself.

Get to the end of yourself. Sometimes we need to watch out for an opportunity. Be sensitive, Mamas, to what your children's spirits are doing.

Sometimes their spirits begin to get out of control. And if you can notice it right away, we do them a favor rather than waiting until they've suddenly just lost it. And you wonder what happened to this child.

If we had been paying attention sooner. For example, let's say you're sitting around a living room and there's some children sitting in the middle of the floor playing. Your child's right there.

You've got your eye on them. And all of a sudden you see them just take their book and go like that and throw it down. Probably that child is then going to come over against you and flop on your lap and flop around a little.

If you don't pay attention, my guess is they'll probably go find another child to torment or something naughty to do. They'll turn a tub of toys upside down or they'll knock over somebody's blocks or they'll sit in the chair that the little girl just got off of. Their spirit is out of control and they don't know how to do it themselves to get it back in.

They'll do something finally where you'll wake up to what's going on and take them and discipline them. But if we're sensitive right off the bat, we can help them. When we see that first act of frustration when they come over to us, what they're really wanting is, Help me.

I feel out of control and I don't know how to get it back. Take them up on your lap. Now they may resist you because their spirit is out of control.

It's time to hold them tight and say, No, just sit on mommy's lap a while. Kiss them. Love them.

Thank you for coming to me. I've been missing you. Affirm them.

Let their little heart soften. Let their will get back. They'll thank you.

Children want this. And we do well to watch for it early on. I've heard Jason many times again tell Becca, Watch Kaylee.

She needs a sphincon. There's been Ethan, Carissa, whoever, a something that he's recognized. They're feeling rich.

Just watch for your first chance for any reason to take that opportunity to bless that child and bring their spirit back in again. You're building a relationship when you do this, when you train obedience. If you don't remember anything else I say tonight, I want you to remember these three things.

Number one. Relationships are more important than issues and things. Number two.

Relationships are more important than issues and things. And number three. Relationships are always more important than any issue or anything.

We're building a relationship. Remember, we want this child to give us his heart. Why? So he'll give his heart to God.

It's that simple. We're just talking about how you do that. Force doesn't build a relationship.

Can I force you to love me, Andrea? Force will never build a relationship. You can't force respect. Respect is earned.

Trust is earned. Obedience is trained. Relationships are built.

Control is necessary, yes. We are their authority, but we need to be really careful to balance that control. And I want to too often... I'm going to write these up here so we can see them.

Too often we think in terms of control and correction. And I'd like to change that for us tonight. If you're a mother with lots of young children, you probably know what it feels like at the end of the day to feel like all you did was control and correct all day long.

You feel more like a policeman than a mother. Well, children fear policemen, but that's not the kind of fear you want. You want a friendship, respect type of fear.

So let's change this control and correction to opportunity and affection. Opportunity and affection rather than control and correction. It's a whole different perspective.

Think about what happens to your relationship with your child if all day long all they hear is, no, go do this, no, don't do that. I said stop it. I told you not to do that.

Shut the door. Get out of my way. Go pick up the toys.

Think how that must feel to a child at the end of the day when that's what they've heard all day long. You didn't build any relationship. You really weren't very respectable.

Your communication didn't do a lot for your child wanting to give his heart to you. Sometime, try this. If you feel like that's your habit, this may be a good discipline.

Sometime take a blank sheet of paper in the morning. Write your child's name across the top. Use your most trying child and discipline yourself all day long to go write down what you said to that child.

Sit and read it in the evening. It may be revealing. We don't want to just control and correct our children all the time.

I want you to see that this is a little sinner. God's loaning it to us for a little while to prepare this child to respond to Him. And everything that happens in those years is an opportunity to shape that little soul for eternity.

Train your mind to think that way. Train your mind to see a naughtiness as a blessed opportunity to get to take that child and spend some one-on-one time. Whether it's spank, whether it's open the Bible, whether it's love, it's an opportunity I get.

Here's this soul. I'm shaping it. And here's another opportunity yet today to spend some time shaping this little lump of clay from ugly sinner to soldier for the kingdom of God.

See the different perspective? It can change our minds. Train your mind to think in terms of opportunity. Other opportunities.

Let's say it's late in the afternoon and you need to make a run to town. Daddy's home. Hour till supper time.

Need to go pick up something. Take one child. This one.

Look for opportunities for one-on-one times. So you take this child. Talk all the way to town.

I don't care what you talk about. Just talk. Well, that maybe is not true.

Talk with that child. Okay, you've gotten your item at the grocery. You're hurrying back to the van.

Three steps behind you all the way, you know, because you're hurrying. All of a sudden you feel this tug on your hand. Mommy! Mommy! And over there along the sidewalk is a little bench and a little alcove.

Mommy! Mommy! Can we go sit on the bench? You have two options. You can be in control. You can say, No, Sally, we've got to get home.

Daddy's waiting. We need supper on time. We've got to get home.

Sorry, just didn't work this time. Your child is probably not damaged. But that's not the issue.

You have another option. You can say, Sure, Sally. Let's go sit on the bench.

How sweet of someone to put a bench there. And you sit down and you swing your legs while she swings her little legs. And you talk about the beauty in a butterfly and how nice it was of somebody to put this quiet little place where you and her could sit there together.

And two minutes later, you can say, Come on, Sally. Let's go home. We're going to get supper in time for Daddy.

But wasn't that fun? And all the way home, you talk about that. Two minutes did not change your life one bit. But it did hers.

It made a tremendous difference in your relationships. You can make choices like that all day long. Your child can come running.

Mommy, can I go out and pick an apple? You can say, I don't want you to pick an apple. You need to go pick up the puzzles. Now get done.

Or you can stop and you can get down and look them in the eye and you can say, You know, it's not a real good time to pick an apple now. There's puzzles all over the living room floor. Why don't you go pick up the puzzles? When you're finished with that, you and I will go out and pick an apple and I'll help you peel it and we'll share it.

It doesn't take very much more time. But look at the difference in the effect. Look at the difference in the atmosphere you're creating in your home.

Look at the difference in how much your child is going to trust you, respect you, feel loved. Look at the relationship difference. Look at the communication difference.

Look at everything as an opportunity to build a relationship. Affection. Affection does not take long.

Now, obviously, our children need corrected. I'm not crossing out control and correction for once and for all. But I'm just saying let's change our whole mindset from control and correction to opportunity and some affection.

It does not take long to rumple his hair as he walks past every time. It doesn't take long to just brush their cheek. It doesn't take long to drop a kiss on their forehead, to squeeze their arm as they go by.

It doesn't take any time at all to say, I'm so glad you're my son today. It doesn't take time to show affection. Affection shows in our tone, in our words, in our actions.

Exercise in this, sisters. Practice on your sisters if you don't have children yet. Practice on your husband.

He'll love it. You know, affection doesn't take time. But our children need it.

We kiss our children goodnight every night. I don't mean just kiss them. We go to their room and tuck them in.

The night before Rebecca was married, we tucked her in bed and gave her her kiss. The night before Mickey was married, we all went in the bedroom and kissed Mickey goodnight. Daddy and I have got to be last.

You know, that doesn't really take much time. But a whole lifetime of that creates an atmosphere that says, I can trust you. I can give you my heart.

And a bonus to that is, you know, sometimes it's quick. Sometimes we stay and talk. Sometimes that's when the little confessions come out.

You know, you get blessings out of things like that. But all this says, you are a priority to me. I love to be with you.

Without you, I'd be lonely. And that says, I can trust you. You can have my heart.

Tell me what to do. I'll do it. Remember, that's what we're after.

We want them to say to God, tell me what to do. I'll do it. It's not impossible.

It's really not impossible. In fact, it's much more pleasant than the weariness that comes at the end of day of scolding and correcting and controlling and spanking all day long. It's much different for you and much different for your child.

And the difference is, how you look at training. Are you controlling? Are you just making it through every day? Or are you thrilled with the opportunity that God has given you to mold a sinner into a soldier for Jesus Christ? Maybe you need to change your mind. Maybe that would help things.

You're looking at your children and saying, I don't know what to do with this child. Maybe I need to see what I need to do with Mama. Okay, let's review just a little bit before we go on to time.

We need to see the vision. It's a holy trust. The soul for Him.

And we need a quiet, controlled, orderly atmosphere where children feel confident. We must have obedience. We may not allow them to grow up just being the sinner that they are when they come to us.

And now time. This is a really big one. Children feel love through quality time.

You know, with babies it comes natural. We touch them all the time, but it's easy when they grow up to quit having that one-on-one time, especially when there's several. One Sunday afternoon we were sitting in the living room, this was a few years ago, but we asked our children, Why have you given us your hearts? Life has been a mess.

Why? And every one of them answered different because of their age differences, but it all equated time. I sat with Rick this morning after we did some school together, and I said, So Rick, why have you given your heart to Daddy and I? He said, I don't know. You love me.

And I said, Okay. How do you know we love you? He said, You spend time with me. I mean like, I know Daddy's busy, but every minute he can, he's with us.

Sometimes he studies all night on Saturday night because he spent the day with us on Saturday. I just know he likes to spend time with me. And he said, And he rebukes me, you know, and I know it's because he loves me.

He's not mad at me. He tells me why he's training my heart in this way. I don't know.

I just, you just love me. I know you love me. Damn, it was just a natural thing.

But it, again, he was saying time. It was all about time. Time to any child means stop, look, and listen.

Any age, that's going to feel like love. That's going to feel like they can trust that. They can respect that.

Time with your children takes time, obviously. Newborns get all that touch. A little older, it's the rod and the loving way we train them.

It's the stories. Time is interpreted to children about how attentive we are. Did you know you can spend the whole day with your child and never really spend any time with them? It can happen.

You can help them exist through the day, but never really stop to look into their eyes and understand their heart and give them quality time. If your child has shown you the same picture that they've shown you six times before in the last hour, admire it afresh every time. If you have a talkative teenager that loves way more detail than you love, listen anyway.

If it's important to them, make it important to you. It means, you're important to me. To them, that means, I can trust you.

You might get tired of child chatter, but I can promise you, Mamas, if you want adult chatter, chatter back. Chatter and chatter and chatter. Now, obviously, the obsessive talker needs some training, but responding to their talking means you're special.

I care about you. You're beginning to teach them to communicate when you stop and listen and respond. Be consistent with something in their lives.

Let's take story time. If you only read them a story when you have time to read them a story, that gives an entirely different message than if you read a story every day. Now, every every has its exception, but your child will never know when it all of a sudden dawned on him, Mama reads me a story every day.

That feels like I'm special. I'm important. Be undignified with your children.

You can be the dolly's grandma. You can be the elevator man when they vroom through the kitchen, you know, with their truck. It's little ways that you give them quality attention that they feel loved.

Now, I don't mean every time they run up to you and demand attention. I can remember in Grangeville it was a group of young families and I would go home on a Sunday afternoon so frustrated because I didn't finish one single conversation with any sister there because of all these children. Children can be trained.

If you're in a conversation, and again, we can't get into a lot of how-tos here, but this one gains respect also. They can be trained to walk up to you and lay their hand on your arm. You can put your hand on their hand.

You can glance at them and wink, squeeze their hand and go back to your conversation. That child knows you're aware. He's not forgotten.

Then, when the time is good, you can excuse yourself from your conversation, get down there, meet their needs, send them on their way. You've spent time. You've done the time right.

You've also trained respect. So, how-tos is a subject. It's all your own, but I'm talking about time where you keep them near you.

You're washing dishes. They're rinsing. You're sewing.

They're stringing buttons. You're dusting. They have a dust cloth.

You're inside. They're inside. You're outside.

They're outside. And again, don't take this blank because they go outside and play sometimes, but this kind of a mentality, it's why Jenny leaving left such a hole in my life. We did everything together.

When we sewed, we both sewed. When we cooked, we both cooked. It didn't have to be efficient.

That's just the way we lived. It didn't matter how busy we were. If somebody had to run a Walmart, we both went.

We didn't even discuss it. That's just the way we live. Start that when they're little.

That is relationship, and that's necessary if you're going to have their hearts. If you have lots of children, you need to plan one-on-one times. It's important that each child feels special and that they're able to trust that they are important to you.

In the older children, stop, look, and listen is just as important. Our children need to know that we know them well enough that if they're holding something back, we know it. It's kind of that same safety that the child feels when he wants you to reign in their spirit.

If Jeffrey comes home from work and he's had a rough day, he walks in the kitchen and I'm getting supper and I say, Hi, Jeff. Welcome home. Did you have a good day? I go back to stirring my macaroni.

He's okay. But look at the difference. If I look up, I stop and I say, Something didn't go so good today, Jeff.

Sit down here. I need to keep stirring the macaroni, but let's talk. It's a whole different picture.

We need to be able to read our children, and if you start looking at them when they're little, when they get older, they will be able to. It says you're a priority. Jeffrey's considering going to Indonesia and his daddy gave him the blessing to look into it, find out about the plans.

I called him at work the other day and he said, By the way, Mama, I talked to Brother Malon and it sounds like probably he's going to be willing to let me off. And I said, Jeff, good. That's exciting.

And he wasn't saying too much. And I said, Isn't that exciting? And he said, Well, I haven't talked to daddy about the final plans yet. And I thought, Lord, give me that kind of heart towards Jeffrey's daddy.

He wasn't even letting himself get excited yet. He pretty much knew he had his daddy's blessing, but he didn't have his final stamp of approval. Why? Time.

Rocking chair time. Story time. Bike ride time.

Using the rod time. Morality check time. Bible time.

Time, time, time. It means I can trust you. Whatever it takes for your child to know that they have that kind of commitment towards you, you'll get that kind of commitment back.

One thing Rick said this morning when he was talking about time was, he said, You know, Mama, or about why he gave us his heart, he said, You share everything with us. And I had to think about that. We do.

Not everything, obviously. But there are things that we do share with our children that they know don't go outside the doors of our house because that shows them we trust you. We respect you.

You're adults. For example, my daddy is a widower. And a while back, he called and told me that he was praying about a local widow there in their area.

Now, I can almost promise you, Daddy didn't want me to tell anybody. But our children's daddy and myself felt like this was a good opportunity for our children. Grandpa will never know.

They knew. But we told him, Grandpa's considering marriage. Let's pray.

They knew this was not something we talked about. When Daddy called, and in tears told me he chooses rather to stay a widow, again, he'll never know. Our children knew it.

But then our children could pray for Grandpa again. Share things with them. Share secrets with your little children.

Start that when they're little. You can pull Johnny into the kitchen. You can get down on his level and you say, Johnny, I'll tell you a secret.

You can't tell the other children because they're too little. They might tell. But we're making apple dumplings for Daddy for supper.

And nobody knows but me and you. And they're so proud because you trust them with a secret. You can do that.

You can start that little and it can just go into when they're grown. You trust them, they'll trust you. You respect them, they'll respect you.

You love them, they'll love you. You communicate. You get a relationship.

And pray. Pray, pray, pray. I know we're praying, and Mamas, I'm not going to say a lot on this.

If God knows every hair on the head of your child, there is nothing too small for you to talk to him about. And remember, it's not your child anyway. It's his.

Just loaned to you for a little while. He wants you to talk to him about his child. Our children need to hear us pray.

If they're going to grow in faith, they need to hear us. Ask for things. See us.

Get answers to prayer. Teach them to praise. Let them hear you praise.

Pray the scriptures for your children. Lord, please deliver Johnny from the powers of darkness and draw him into the kingdom of your dear son. Put your children's name in there.

Pray the scriptures. You can know that you're praying God's will when you pray the scriptures. So I don't know how you're feeling by now.

Maybe someone feels like I may as well just give up. But let me encourage you, if you remove the authority, they won't respect your authority. The best thing that we can do, if we're feeling we're lacking,

and I'm sure all of us are lacking somewhere in this, look real deep into your own hearts, sisters.

Please don't go home and look at your children. Remember, they're sinners. They're just acting like sinners do.

If there's a problem, I need to look deep into my own heart. Do a self-examination. Is my will sold out to God's will? Is my will yielded to Mark's will? Am I disciplining in love? Am I disciplining with a vision of raising a soldier for Christ in mind? Does this child know without a doubt that he's number one priority to me? Am I affirming? Am I giving affection? Have I been consistent in my expectations? Self-examination.

Come before the Lord with these questions on your heart, if there's areas that you feel like you're really failing. Is my only vision for this child that he'll say, Yes, Lord? Whatever you want, at any cost. I'm yours.

That's what we're raising. Are they seeing a stability in me that they can trust? Maybe I've been lax on my discipline, inconsistent, and they're confused. Maybe I need to pray more.

What is the whole atmosphere that I'm wrapping this child in? There's a sister in Grangeville that is raising her children by herself, Crystal. One of her children, Rebecca, is a very impossible child, angry little girl. One weekend, Crystal had taken her four children to Southern Idaho to church.

She called and told me about this. She said, and she was impossible. She was so naughty.

I was praying on the way home, Lord, what can I do? I felt the Lord speaking to my heart. Spend time with her. So she said, I thought, Okay, we'll cut out quilt blocks.

We'll sew together quilt patches. This is my sewing machine beside her sewing machine next week. I'm going to spend time.

But she said, Ann, till we got home, I was so tired of her. I thought, How am I going to spend all next week sewing quilt up with this little girl? They got home, and it was winter. They walked in the house, and the fire had gone out.

It was cold, and Rebecca went in, stomping her feet and grumbling and griping. Went to the kitchen and got a bucket and put hot water in it and sat down and stuck her feet in it. Crystal was trying to get the fire going, and she said, The Lord said, Wash your feet.

She said, I did, but I turned around and took her feet in my hands, and I began to wash her feet. She said, Mama, no. She said, I just held them there.

I know Crystal well enough to know that her tears plopped into the water as she prayed for that little girl. She said, Ann, she followed me around like a little puppy dog for two weeks. She said, Even after that, it bridged hard times.

Something changed in our relationship. I don't know, Mama. Maybe we need to just humble ourselves and serve our children a little bit more.

It doesn't mean to let go of our authority. Remember, you don't have to respect us if we don't take our place of authority. We need to check our own hearts.

So my question this evening is, is the atmosphere that you are creating in your home lending itself to your child? Trusting you? Respecting you? Does he feel totally secure in your love? Are you communicating? Are you building relationships? I'm going to do a couple of scenarios here to maybe try to paint a picture of how it may be. I'm going to pretend that I'm little Johnny in each of these scenarios. I'm Johnny and I get up in the morning and I turn around and I make my bed.

And I go downstairs and as I enter the kitchen, Mama's standing at the stove stirring the porridge. She says, Morning, Johnny. Did you make your bed? Good.

Glad you made your bed. Could you set the table for me? I'm running a little behind here. The baby's been fussy.

I'm trying to get the laundry going and stuff. Could you set the table for me before we eat breakfast? Thanks. Thanks, Johnny.

I appreciate that. So I set the table and the family comes in for breakfast and we all sit down and nobody says too much. It doesn't seem like anybody has much to say this morning.

The porridge is a little scorched. That's all right. The baby was fussy.

We can forgive Mama for that. Nobody complains really. Katie spills orange juice and makes Mom kind of cross.

I get a towel and I help clean it up. Breakfast is over and Mama says, Now, Johnny, get a hustle in there and if you would clear up the table and do up the dishes and as soon as you get that done get out your school books. You know, you're kind of behind and I've got to take care of the baby here besides Daddy.

And she says, I want to get the living room spring clean today. So if you need me, you just holler. I'll come help you.

I didn't know she would. She does come when I need help at school but sometimes it seems like she's kind of distracted. She's jiggling the baby on one hip and tons of phone rings.

She goes and answers that and she even forgets to come back. I get the dishes done and I get my school books out from the living room and Mama hollers, You know, Johnny, it's really nice out today and Daddy really needs your help but you've been dallying around with your school so bad that you're behind. I just can't let you go out today.

Get busy now and you stick at it there. So I stick at it but I don't like school much. It's kind of lonely here in the kitchen.

I hear Mama working in the living room. She comes and helps me when I need help. I get through my morning, put my books away and Mama calls from the kitchen, Johnny, can you just open a can of chicken noodle soup for lunch? I kind of don't want to leave what I'm doing here.

I really do want to get this done. We've got church cleanup tonight, you know, and I want to get it done today. Can you just open some chicken noodle soup? Sure, I can open chicken noodle soup.

I cut my finger a little on the lid and I go to get a band-aid and Mama says, what happened, Johnny? Oh, sorry about that. You should have been a little more careful. You're big enough, you ought to be able to

open cans, you know, without cutting yourself.

I get lunch on the table and Daddy comes in and we sit down and we eat lunch and it's kind of quiet. Nobody says much. It seems like Daddy's busy thinking.

Mama's going to soon up away from the table and clean out the living room. She says, Johnny, just throw the dishes in the sink there. There's taters out there that need hoed and weeded and I want you to go weed those taters.

I know it's hot, but you're going to be a big boy. You can do that. Appreciate that.

I'll be out to help you after a bit, but I want to get these curtains in the washer so I can get them taken care of before we go to church clean up tonight. So I head out to the tater patch and it is hot out and them rows are long and I hate to weed taters. Besides that, it's lonely out here.

I've been weeding a while and I hear Mama coming out and I'm glad at least company will be nice, you know, and she starts on the next row and she's off to work faster than me and the next thing you know she's passing me up and she's reminding me I missed a couple back there and I go back and get them. Mama passes me up and she finishes her row and I still got a little ways to go. She says, Johnny, I'm going back in the house now and I need to get them curtains ironed.

You know, got to get them hung up and we've got church clean up tonight and you just finish up your row there and try to get it done before Daddy comes in. This is really hot and this is really lonely and I hate weeding taters. Finally, I see Daddy going in the house so I go in and it's cold cereal for supper.

Mama's cleaning the living room, you know. We sit down in the cold cereal for supper and we eat pretty quick and we get up from the table and throw the dishes, top of the lunch dishes in the sink and head out the door. Katie pinches her fingers on the way out.

She's bawling and Mama's carrying the baby and Daddy's already in the van and got it started before we all get out there and we all crawl in and we take off for church clean up. Everybody seems so cross. I don't know, I feel kind of cross inside.

We get to church clean up and we all unload and we all get out Mama and Daddy start up the hill there to the church and I watch them and they're smiling. They're so friendly. Seems like they have time to talk to the brothers and sisters.

I see the boys out there in the field playing ball and I take off. We have a good time. I sort of forget about it.

Oh, I don't know what made me do it. I tripped a belly once just kind of feeling mean, I guess, but we play ball and I kind of forget about the way it is and next thing you know, it's time to go and we get home and there sits that sink full of dishes and Mama says, Well, go on to bed, Johnny. Get them in the morning.

Good night. Thanks for your help today, Johnny. I appreciate it.

I go up to bed. I crawl in bed and I lay there and I think, I feel so lonely. I know Mama and Daddy love me.

Yeah. I know they love me. I'm sure they love me.

Well, I guess I'm glad I've got the boys. I don't know what tomorrow morning will be like. I'll have to wash some dishes before I set the table.

Now, let's see another picture of another little Johnny. Now, let's see I wake up in the morning and I turn around and make my bed because I know that's the way Mama likes it. I go downstairs and as I go down the steps I hear her singing in the kitchen.

I step into the kitchen and she looks over at me, Good morning, Johnny. I am so thankful you woke up this morning. That means we have another day together.

She lays down her stirring spoon and she comes over and she gets down on her knees and she kisses me on the cheek and she rumbles up my hair. It's a mess anyway, you know. And she says, Johnny, did you make your bed? I said, I did, Mama.

She said, You're such a good boy. Do you know what a blessing you are to me? And she goes back to stirring her porridge and she says, Johnny, would you mind setting the table for me? I'm kind of running behind this morning. The baby's been a little fussy.

I can't believe it. I had no idea Mama was in a hurry. I had no idea she was running behind.

Spending all that time with me? Sure, I'll set the table for Mama. Loving me up like that, I'd be glad to set the table for Mama. We chatter as I set the table.

The whole family all comes in and we sit down at the table and we join hands. Papa prays. He blesses Mama.

She's kind of embarrassed. The porridge is kind of scorched. She left a little bit there, you know, to go take care of the fussy baby.

But nobody minds. Mama's so faithful. We just bless Mama for breakfast and we get done eating while we all push our bowls back from the table and we fold our hands on top of the table.

That's the way Daddy's taught us to do. You know, he's going to read the Word of God. Daddy opens up the Word and he reads real slow so we children can understand.

He reads, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. And he explains what that means. Until he gets done explaining I think, Well, that sounds just like my Daddy and me.

Wow, I mean, that's what Jesus is like. That's just like my Daddy. That's just like my Mama.

That's the way she treated me this morning. Well, I think I'll make the Lord my shepherd someday. We pray.

Mama says, Now, Johnny, it's school time. I'm going to go rock the baby to sleep. If you don't mind the bed, just stack the dishes.

I'll do them. But if you can get the table cleared up, you can start on your schoolwork and you know, if you need me, Johnny, I'll be there. And I know she will.

She always is there. She gets the baby down for a nap. She puts little Katie in the corner on her blanket.

You know, she's two and she can play blanket time for almost an hour and just be happy because Mama taught her that, you know. And Mama does dishes. She's over there humming while she's doing dishes and I'm doing school and she's helping me when I need help.

I don't know why the boys complain about school so much. I don't mind school. I mean, school's not that great.

I'd rather play ball, but I've got Mama here and we're talking and she's helping me and Daddy tells me, you know, I'm grown to be a man. It's not bad. We get through the morning and Mama says, Johnny, you can go pick up the baby if you'd like.

I'll open us a can of chicken noodle soup and we'll just have a quick little lunch here with the family and Daddy comes in and we all gather around and everybody's talking at once. Daddy finally has to stop us and give us a lesson, you know, on being respectful and not button in to other people. Just so much to learn seems like when you're growing up, but Mama and Daddy, they just teach me with so much love and don't look too hard.

After lunch is all cleared up, Mama says, now, Johnny, we're going to go sit down with the children and we'll read a story and get the little ones down for a nap and then you and I is going to go pull weeds out of them taters. I'm too big for stories, you know. I don't need stories anymore, but Mama says, now, you sit here.

I sit there and I look at Mama with the little ones all around her and the little ones in her lap and I think, you know, she must have done that for me, too. I don't really remember, but I guess the little ones come along and I had to get off her lap, but I'm sure she did. She's always done it for the little ones.

We listen to the story and she gets them down for a nap and then Mama and I, we go out and we pull weeds out of them taters. It's hot and then Rosa's long. But Mama, you know, she could go a whole lot faster than I could, but she just stays right by me.

Every now and then if I miss a weed, she'll reach over and she'll pluck it out and wink at me or sometimes she reminds me to get it. We talk as we weed them rows of taters and the sun don't feel too hot. I'm still kind of glad when I see Daddy heading in for supper and Mama says, oh, it's church cleanup tonight and I don't have supper ready.

You know, I heard Mama say yesterday she was going to wash them living room curtains and here she was out pulling weeds with me instead of washing curtains and that makes me feel so good. I'm more important to Mama than curtains. We go in and we just have cold cereal for supper.

Mama's kind of embarrassed, you know, and Papa prays. He just blesses her up one side and down the other for the supper and it's just cold cereal but that's alright because, you know, it's better than a mess and we go off to church cleanup and we stack the dishes in the sink and we all load in the van and we sing all the way to church cleanup. Before we get out of the van, Papa turns around and he says, now children, we're at the Lord's house and we're here to work for the Lord tonight and you're big enough and you can help.

We're going to all stick together and we're going to shine knobs and we're going to wash mirrors and we're going to feel toilet paper rolls and we're just going to have a good time working together for the Lord tonight and, you know, we do. Every now and then he stops and visits with the brother, you know, and I

have to wait but that's alright. I just worked alongside Mama and Daddy and the other children all evening.

It felt so good to feel like I was helping in the work of the Lord. I got ready to leave and I realized there's boys out there playing ball and I thought, oh, that would have been kind of fun. Then I thought, you know what, if I had been out there playing ball, sure as I'm a foot high I'd have crawled to bed tonight and I'd have had something.

I'd have gone back downstairs and confessed to Daddy. This way I feel good. We go home and Mama looks at them dishes in the sink and she says, I think I can get them done in the morning before anybody else gets up.

You just trot on along to bed there and they come up and they tuck me in and they pray with me and they kiss me and they go downstairs and I think, I must be the luckiest boy in the world. I've got the best Mama and Daddy in the world. They're like Jesus and I love to serve Jesus and I'm going to serve my Mama and Daddy and Jesus the rest of my life.

See the difference? Now I know that all of our days aren't as bad as the first one and they're not all as good as the second one but it's an entire atmosphere that we wrap our children in that makes a difference in how much they trust us respect us feel loved how much we communicate what kind of relationship we have and whether they're going to give us their hearts and when someday the Lord calls their name they say, Yes Lord whatever you want whenever you want it at any cost. That's what we're after, sisters. That's what we're after.

Keeping our children's hearts for God. This is our part in building a church. This is our part in building the body of Christ.

So when he comes he'll find faith on the earth. Let's pray. Father, it's a holy trust.

Lord, I thank you with all my heart that you've given us your word and you've given us provision and you've given us the Holy Spirit and that it's not impossible. I thank you for that, Lord. Father, I lift up each one of these, my dear precious sisters, this evening to you.

Whether they're young ladies and will someday be mamas. Whether they're married ladies waiting for you to open their womb and give them children. Whether they're already mamas.

Whether we're grandmas. Lord, help us to never, ever get away from the vision of the holy trust it is to have a part in turning a sinner into a soldier for your glory. Father, empower them.

Give them peace in their hearts. Give them courage in their hearts. Speak your will to them.

Help us each one, Father, to play our vital part in building the future of that when you come, when the trumpet sounds, Lord, we'll say yes, Lord, and go home without the loss of one of our children, Father. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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