

want to bring out here for the mother wanting to minister to the heart of her child. In chapter 3 of Exodus, Moses is minding his business, caring for his father-in-law's flock. All of the sudden there is something that gets his attention—a burning bush! As this amazing spectacle is taking place before his eyes, a bush that is on fire, but not being consumed...on fire and speaking to him! God! The God he was trying to run from. The God Who had called him back in Egypt, but surely would have discredited him with his first assignment, you know the one he failed at. God!

The focus point for this chapter is found in verse 6...

"Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob..."

Continue on down in verses 13-15...

"And Moses said unto God, Behold when I come unto the Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My Name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations."

I AM. This is the most crucial lesson that we can teach our children...WHO God is!

Our main thing is leading our little ones to our Heavenly Father. We see that one of the reasons that God chose Abraham was because God knew that Abraham would command his children after the Lord...because God knew that Abraham would lead his little ones to God. His first introduction of Himself to Moses was reminding him that this was GOD! Plus, I believe it was much deeper. It was reminding Moses of all that God *could* be in his life if he just turned back to Him!

I began an awesome study as I ran across this passage. I found something very interesting—all of the names of God were introduced, situation by situation...crisis by crisis...story by story...through the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As matter of fact, in the rest of the story of Moses, we see a constant revelation of Who God is as He worked in the lives of Moses, the Egyptians, and the Israelites.

There is not room in this book for the attention that I would love to give to this awesome truth, but let me briefly list some (*Just a very few! This could go on and on!*) of these names...

• In the Life of Abraham...

- ...LORD (Covenant/Shield/Exceeding Great Reward)
- ...Lord God (Adonai, Master of All; Master Who wants for us to take up all we have and follow Him; God Who wants us to trust Him regardless of changes or lack of foresight; Must give up all for Him!)
- ...El Shaddai (Almighty One Who supernaturally provides when all other means fail!) Genesis 17
- ...Elohim
- ...El Elyon (Genesis 14: 18)
- ...El Roi (Genesis 16: 13)
- ...El elohe-Israel (Genesis 33:20)
- ...El Bethel (Genesis 35:7)
- ...Jehovah Jireh (Genesis 22:8, 14)

• In the Life of Isaac...

(Now...he was there with his father through much of the lessons his father learned. As he left his father's home to begin his own family, he learned *personally* about God.)

- ...Jehovah Jireh (As he went to the Lord to plead with Him for a child...She conceived! BOY did she! TWINS!)
- ...Covenant LORD (Genesis 26: 24)

• In the Life of Jacob...

(Again keep in mind that his life overlapped Abraham's and Isaac's! Isn't this neat? This statement is truly powerful because we see that it was deeply impressed upon each and every generation how God had revealed Himself specifically to each man!)

- ...El Shaddai (God Almighty) Genesis 28: 1-9 (Tower of Strength)
- ...LORD (God of Abraham, God of Isaac...Genesis 28:13 during the covenant; I AM with thee vs. 15)
- ...Covenant LORD (Genesis 28: 10-22)

There is so much more! Don't you think it is neat how God showed Himself to these men? This statement to Moses was powerful! It was a history lesson of God's revelation to man!

Oh, I hope that you are seeing how Awesome our Lord is! He is saying that for any circumstance in our lives, He is all that we need! During every crisis, every struggle, every battle, every wait...during every single situation in our lives, God is I AM, God for every need we have! This is what we are to *know* about our Lord. This is what is supposed to be on our hearts. This is what we are to impress upon the hearts of our children.

You may think that you have very little to share with your children, but think back over your life. Nothing is wasted. Even today, can you see God in the midst of your day? What is He trying to teach you about Himself today? This is to be on your heart so you can impress it upon the hearts of your children. These truths have power! They make the difference in how your children will live—their response to trials, their attitude toward life, their relationships with others, and even whether they have meaning and purpose in their lives. As we give them the basic foundation to know God, we equip them for anything that comes into their lives and we minister to the depths of their heart!

Who IS God?

Elohim (God)...Mighty Creator; Giver of life; He knows each and every child; He knows exactly what they need; He knows exactly where they are going; Only One that can bring LIFE into your home; the One Who takes our life and transforms it into abundant life!

El Elyon...Most High; Delivers enemies into our hand (In Genesis 14:20 He delivered Abraham's enemies into his hand!); Redeemer (He can give you back lost ground...lost time!); Rules today in all affairs; God Who has all we need to do anything; One Who wants to give you all in abundance; With complete sovereignty—He has THE plan; He sends you exactly where He plans...He is in this with you!

El Roi...The God Who Sees (Remember the story of Hagar? Alone, did what she was commanded to do by her authorities, suffering for obedience...but not alone! God was there and He did see!); He is there; His eyes are not shut!

El Shaddai...All-sufficient One; Protector; Sustainer of life; Unconditional Lover of my soul; Holds us through the hard times; Our Refuge during toughest days; All-Bountiful; Full of blessings; Quiets the restless; Gives life; Pours Himself and His Spirit out for us; Gives Himself and His very nature to us freely!

Adonai...Lord and Master/demands TOTAL obedience (Following without knowing the details: the reason, the results, the ramifications, the rewards...!)

• **Jehovah...I AM WHO I AM**; Self-existent one; Eternal; Alpha and Omega; Same yesterday, today, and tomorrow; Possesses and grants eternal LIFE; Covenant Keeping; Unchanging God; All LIFE is in Him; Faithful to His Word for all generations!

• **Jehovah Jireh...**The Lord Who will provide; His very being is to love and give to me; He delights in giving to me!

• **Jehovah Rapha...**The Lord Who heals spirit, soul, mind, and body!

• **Jehovah Jireh...**The Lord Who Redeems (brought out of Egypt; fed daily in the wilderness)

• **Jehovah Nissi...**The Lord we are to look unto in the battle; The One Who goes before us!

• **Jehovah Mekoddishkem...**The Lord Who sanctifies; Makes us holy!

• **Jehovah Shalom...**The Lord OUR peace; Brings us peace instead of turmoil, strife, and confusion!

• **Jehovah Sabaoth...**The Lord of hosts; Our strength; Our deliverer; Our refuge; Our judge; Our strong tower; Our safety; Our endurance!

• **Jehovah-rah...**The Lord our Shepherd; One clear voice/right way-straight narrow way; brings rest/nourishment/comfort; gives the best, running over; always with me; leads in truth.

• **Jehovah-tsidkenu...**The Lord our righteousness; Makes us righteous.

• **Jehovah Shammah...**The Lord is THERE; The One Who bears our load; The One Who gives us step-by step direction (Remember in Exodus as He led the Israelites as cloud by day/fire by night??); Help in the battle; One Who can and does bring us out of captivity; He is there to bring glory!

Lead Them to the Father...

Who is God to you? Which aspects of His character do you **know**? What have you experienced from your relationship with Him? These are the lessons that you are to impress upon your children! You may be just now getting to know your Lord. That is OK! He will show you the most important lessons for your child. You may have one life message

of His faithfulness in one area over and over. That is OK! That is the message that you are to impress upon your children.

Do you have a hurting child? Do you have a curious child? Do you have a child surrendered to God? Wherever you are, whatever your circumstance, lead your little ones to the Father. Instill a passion for Him. Let him minister to the needs of your child! You can trust Him to be ALL they will ever need!

Vision...That He May RUN!



One bad day...that is all it takes for us to begin to wonder if our children are *ever* going to become vessels that God can use! We see all those natural tendencies. We see all of those character flaws. We see the LONNNNNGGG way that we have to go to get them ready for God to use. What do we do on those days we feel like screaming? How can we minister to them when we feel like quitting?

Probably one of our greatest hindrances on those bad days is that we fail to see our children as God sees them—a finished product, lacking *nothing!* *Wow!* They already have a call, which is individual for them and them alone! God has already equipped them with the gifts that they will need for their call. Our role is to train them up for their call and to give them a vision of that call from God!

Train, But HOW???

How do we train them? Let's look at Proverbs 22: 6 for God's focus when training children...

"Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Amplified Version)

God's focus is **individual** for each child. He has an individual plan and individual way that each child is supposed to go. His plan focuses on each child's individual gifts and bents. Our children need desperately to know what they are good at...what their specific gifts are...how to use those gifts for God's glory...and a glimmer of God's vision for them. If we can train them in this way, *The Way they should go*, then when they are old, they will not depart from it!

A while back, Harold and I were discussing vision...mainly the vision that God has given us for OUR ministry as a family. Elisabeth was particularly thoughtful. Later, as we were alone, she asked me, "Momma, what do you think God wants for ME to be when I grow up? Has He put anything on your heart for me?" I teared up instantly. Partly because in the depths of my heart, I have a passion for encouraging my children to surrender with their whole heart to God's call...unlike those years I spent in resisting God's call! I

shared with her that God has shown me that she will be a virtuous woman...a Proverbs 31, Titus 2, 1 Peter 3 woman. I told her that I see her already as a godly wife, mother, homemaker, and mentor. I shared with her that I was excited about how God was going to use her influence in her home to influence the culture.

She gleamed as I spoke this vision over her. This vision was an encouragement to her. I could see that she was blessed to just simply *know* that I thought great and noble thoughts about her. This little girl was fired up to get to know God *more* so she could minister to the fullest! Just this one-to-one time of speaking the vision that God has been revealing to me gave her a peace and contentment that she could rest in God's plan because *He did have one* and had already shared a glimmer of it with me!

Now, I must tell you that at that moment, I did not even think about what I was doing. I just shared with her my heart. God took that moment to show me a key to ministering to this little girl and to all others that I will mother and mentor! Actually, I did not even put this together until a little later when I read an article in *Homeschool Digest* by Karen Jahn. She quoted a verse that brought this natural, quaint moment into a life lesson for me. In Habakkuk 2:2 we are challenged,

"Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may RUN that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it: because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

What conviction this verse instilled in my life! I was challenged to not just have a vision for my children, but to constantly speak it, write it, and encourage them with it! Elisabeth was instantly encouraged in her heart as she found that indeed Mommy *did* have a vision for her. Mommy did care enough to go to God to find His plan for her life.

It is vital that we realize how important it is for our children to really *know* that God has a plan for them and their life. They need to know that they have purpose in their lives. I have seen Elisabeth become more confident and secure as we have begun to speak the vision...write the vision...make the vision *plain*. She is now able to *run* with passion and direction. Oh, yes...that vision is a life vision...but, life begins *now*! Life is not an illusive tomorrow. It is *today*! We are never promised tomorrow, so our children must be taught to use their gifts *today*.

Vision...Where Do You Find Out What God Has Planned?

So, how can we find God's vision for our children? If you want to know the vision that

God has for your children, I challenge you to go to God for His vision. He is easy! He clarifies in Romans 12: 1-2 how we may know His *exact* will and His *exact* way! The Amplified Version says...

"I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good, and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].

Want a vision for your children? This verse tells us how...

Present ourselves to God as a complete, living sacrifice......meaning that all we have and all we do must be completely yielded, dedicated, and committed to Him and His Way! This means *all* that we are: our plans...ambitions...ideas...methods... techniques...fears... concerns...*all* must be presented to God as a living sacrifice. Think back to the story of Abraham. Remember how God asked him to sacrifice his best, his Isaac, as an act of worship? You may think that to be an odd requirement, but God cannot allow us to have anything that becomes more precious to us than worshipping *Him*. Abraham obediently took Isaac up to the mountain. I believe that Abraham *knew* that his heart was committed completely to God, but this was the test to see just *how* committed he really was. God asked him to present his best as his sacrifice, his Isaac. Here, we find that if we are desiring to *know* the good, acceptable, perfect will of God for *ourselves* or *our children*, we must first obediently present ourselves as a complete, living sacrifice. There may be things in our lives that must be burnt up as a sacrifice for God's best OR we may find that what we brought to sacrifice before the Lord was acceptable in His sight and can return home with us. However, the key is not in what God does with our sacrifice, it is in our heart coming before Him daily, presenting ourselves and all that we have before His throne!

Forsake the world's standards, the world's ways, and the world's bondage......meaning that as we search for God's standards, God's Way, and we find God's freedom. There is great freedom in God's design for womanhood. Only in God's design will we find direction for the path our children are to walk upon!

Be transformed by the daily renewal of your mind...meaning that if you want a changed life, it begins as you sit at the feet of Jesus. As you daily immerse yourself in His Word, you will begin to be transformed. You will soon have different priorities...different beliefs...different ambitions...and soon, you will be able to prove what is good, acceptable, and perfectly in the will of God. If we never experience this transformation, we will always find ourselves burdened under a yoke of bondage. We will always find ourselves looking in all the wrong places for direction, approval, meaning, purpose, and rest!

As we humbly go to God for purification, we will find His vision for our children and minister to their hearts as we share that vision day by day!

Minister through Speaking the Vision...

Ministering to our children through sharing God's vision for them is important. The words that we speak over our children are very important. Words are important because there is power in words. Words can build up, inspire, praise, give direction, encourage, exhort, and minister to the heart of our children. Likewise, we must be very careful about words because they also have the power to criticize, destroy, dishearten, exasperate, frustrate, lead astray, abuse, and break the heart of your child. We must beware of what we say *to* our children and *about* our children. We can do this by...

Being Careful With Our Words...

Words, ah...the power of words! Beware of negative words. Give your children far more encouragement than criticism. I know, I know...I have had toddlers too! There were days that it really did seem as though *a//* I did was correct, punish, clean up the messes, instruct them with what I expect and do it all over and over again! *Yes!* I still mean that there needs to be more encouragement, smiles, hugs, giggles, and fun than correction. Should wear you out while they are that little. Ha! This really does work! It also works when they get to that other age that you want to take them to the closest bus stop!) From the time you give birth to your children, they are steadily loosening the cords until the day that the cord is cut and they join together in union with their spouse. As their individuality surfaces, there are bound to be differences arise. Those differences can be softened by ministering to them through your words and actions!

Being Careful With Our Spirit...

Yes, our spirit. We can say all the right things...do all the right things...yet, still communicate to them thoughts and beliefs about them that we do not want for them to ever

know because we do not like our thoughts and beliefs ourselves! If we have that spirit of... "Well, that is just--- that we are talking about." or "He is just too --- for us to let him..." or "He is just too irresponsible for..." We can rest assured that what we believe of those children, they will become! My son, Matthew, has shared time and time again about how his little friends are broken hearted because their mothers do not trust them. It may be little things, but children truly desire to be trusted and for us to believe in them and their abilities. We must constantly watch what our spirit communicates to them.

Encouraging Them To Be ALL That God Has Created Them To Be...

Encouraging individuality. This is the key to peace, contentment, and inspiration. They need for us to constantly exhort them to become *all* that God has created them to be not what *we* want for them to be so that we look good or feel proud. Praise them when they succeed. Praise their character qualities as they mature and develop them. Let them know how special they are. Each child has his own bent...his own gifts...his own talents. Train them in this way...unique, no comparisons, no copying, completely individual...just like God wants for them to live as adults!

Constantly Share With Them God's Plan And Purpose For Them!

There is no greater encouragement and accountability than constant reminders of what God has promised! Along the way, your children will find *much* encouragement as you help them to see how far they have come and that they are moving toward the higher call! Constantly give them a glimpse of God's vision. Let them know what God has said about their value. Let them know how precious they are to Him. Help to encourage them toward God's plan for their lives!

As you share with your children God's vision for them, you will begin to find your children developing confidence, security, and godly character. Plus, you will be answering the call to minister to their heart!

Inspiring Your Children Toward Greatness



"whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister."
Matthew 20: 26

If you were to come into our home, you would be surprised at our lifestyle. Oh, we are a very typical family. My husband works a regular, everyday (well, for us anyway) job as an Alabama State Trooper Corporal (*since this book was written, he has retired and started his own business! Thought you might like the update!*). We live in the country in a little cedar cabin set back in the middle of our heavily wooded lot. We homeschool our children. We do the Wal-mart thing. We are even so well known at our local library that we don't have to use library cards any more!) We have those Sunday morning rushes to just get to church on time...or not *too* late! All of these "normal" every day things make our family look like any other family, but we are still much different from those in our culture. Yes, we do have some pretty different standards for our lifestyle.

What do I mean by different? For one thing, although we dearly love our children, we have found that children were not born with a deep love to serve and minister. We knew that our children were not going to just naturally realize the needs around them. In fact, we knew that left alone without any training, our children would fall right into step with our culture along with its superficial, external, purposeless ways. We had a vision of what we wanted for our children and our family lifestyle to become. With this heartbeat our family standards became much, much different than is common in families around us.

You can see how it would frustrate things as we found how our precious little children really are! Actually they had tendencies toward selfishness... self-centeredness... laziness... *and* troublemaking with their siblings and friends! For this reason, we found that there were some things that we needed to teach and train our children to do in order for them to become great servants of God. They needed true biblical training. I am not talking about *"training our children up to go to church, so when they are old, they will not depart from church attendance."* This is such a small vision!

I am talking about training that *"twists them toward greatness."* Training that begins at infancy and does not end until old age. Training that is *"firm in effort"* and yet does not let up as they grow older. Yes, you have got it...training that will challenge them to greatness as we diligently train them day-by-day, bit-by-bit.

Serve In The Little Things

When I first married, it was only six months later that we found out that I was actually 7 weeks pregnant with my little boy! I worked for about another month and went home to become a full time wife and mommy. The most shocking thing I found was that working *in* the home was barely noticeable. The most annoying words I could hear after a long day of cleaning out the scum in the refrigerator, cabinets, and bathroom...playing legos and potty training my little toddler...reading those Mercer Mayer books for the umpteenth time were those innocent words that my optimistic husband would say as he walked in the door, *"So, what have you done all day?"* I would grind my teeth. He would look perplexed. It would *tick me off!*

All that I wanted was just a little appreciation...for the little things to be noticed...for my husband to just care about the little things that I was pouring my life into. Awareness of my own struggle, (yes, this was one of the greatest struggles that I faced as I came home to pour my life into my calling) instilled a great conviction for teaching my children from a young age to give all that they could give *and* to do at all times without concern for their work or service being "seen" or "noticed" or "accounted for." This is a *key* to greatness. The best training for this life lesson is in the home.

Little Things...Key to Becoming Great!

One of the primary ways that we teach our children to be great is by instilling a conviction for serving others in our home. It is within the walls of our home that our children will find things to do that are never seen. Oh, things like opening a door for someone needing a hand... putting away clothes or a toy for a sibling for the millionth time (!!!)... feeding their sister's pets...doing their brother's chore... listening to a beginning reader for mom... reading a story book to little brother... playing a game with the little ones... helping mom prepare dinner for guests... These things are little things that serve others. They do not quite make the newspapers or turn up in a biography of our greatest heroes! Little things to the eye, but big things for the kingdom of God!

Little things done in the home for others do not just teach our children to serve with right motives, but it also teaches them to discern the unspoken needs of others. In the

family, we are usually able to detect when one another feels poorly or has nothing working out right that day or goes through a struggle in life. Sensitivity to one another helps us to develop discernment and create ways to minister to others. This "practice" in the home trains our children to become great servants of God.

These lessons are priceless! How many people struggle when they encounter those hurting in our culture? They want to help others, but just do not have any idea of where to begin. Because they do not know where to even begin, many people are left to just hurt. If they were trained from an early age to meet needs (spoken and unspoken), how much better could they minister to others hurting around them?

Want to begin training your children to do those "little things" for others so they can learn how to truly become great?? First, **begin by ministering to them in little ways.** Children catch our enthusiasm as they *watch us* do little things that no one sees. Chances are, our children *will* see those little things that we do. The impression this leaves on their life is immeasurable.

Unseen...But REAL Influence!

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." 1 Peter 3: 3-4

One of my best friends in life was Harold's grandmother, Mamaw Alma Lee Rushton. She did not have a public ministry. She never wrote a book. Few of you would even know her or her name (well, until now!). She seemed to slip between the cracks, huh? Well, actually she was a hidden woman. Her ministry was characterized by the little things. No one ever could tell you about all that she did in her life because it affected too many people, in too many ways. She did this simply by fulfilling her many roles of womanhood. These little things, hidden from attention, were the things that impacted the lives of all who knew her. A hidden woman, yet a powerful woman!

One day Mamaw and I went to visit one of my neighbors. She lived across town from me. My neighbors had lived right behind me. Their house went up in flames causing them to lose everything they ever owned. They had to start completely over with nothing but the love shown by the little things that others did for them. God supernaturally provided a home for them through rental property of Harold's parents, only a few miles down the road from Mamaw. Mamaw knew of the terrible situation. She went to work in her

usual way--*hidden* in the background. She got the ladies of her church (No, she was not in charge of the women's ministry...she was just a lovable church member!) busy providing food, clothes, and countless other little things that would help begin the long process toward rebuilding their home.

I went to see her on just a regular day and got to see her love in action doing the little things. She took me alongside as she took this family some more goodies. While she sat there visiting and assessing any more needs that she could meet in her little ways, she began to share about her precious Saviour. I had never heard her in her "element" but words cannot express what this young mother learned from this dear mentor.

I learned how to be a living witness of my faith. Mamaw did not pass judgment on these people for not being "in church" or "for dressing different." Mamaw met them right where they were—in deep physical and spiritual need. She spent her time with them listening, really listening, to their spoken and unspoken needs. Mamaw was not ashamed of the gospel. She knew that of all the needs this family needed, their greatest need was eternal. They still had a chance to choose Christ. Her sweet, gentle spirit was so comforting. It drew this family to the Lord and paved the way for me to follow in her footsteps for years to come. This is the perfect picture in real life words and actions of the word "train." Mamaw was simply living her life before me. Yet, her example was twisting me into greatness, showing me how to discern and meet the little unspoken needs and serve the least of these! This challenged me to seek to become great through doing the little things. That day she passed on the torch to me. Now, my greatest desire is to pass the same torch on to our children. This is the call. The little things make our children great...those that we instill in these short years!

WHO Are They?!

*"A GOOD name is rather to be chosen than great riches,
and loving favor rather than silver and gold."*

Proverbs 22: 1

Growing up I loved being Larry's daughter...Judy's daughter...one of the Gunters. My parents always instilled my worth in our home. I knew that I had a special place not only in the heart of my parents but also in our family. What I did was a reflection upon them. My actions either brought glory or disgrace...pleasure and delight or disappointment. I was always proud of being one of the Gunters! This has been one of the things that I have brought into our home as Harold and I began our family...The Rushtons!!

Children desperately need to know of their great value. I am not talking about building their self-esteem. I am talking about instilling into their soul that they are a part of something much, much bigger than themselves. They are part of our heritage. They are important because they are a crucial part of our family ministry to the world today. That we cannot do all God has called us to do without them.

Children in our culture are very often confused and very selfish. How often do we hear about preacher's kids...that they are the worse kids?? My question is why? Must they be? Must the home be centered around children...their activities...their pursuits? Why aren't they a part of their family...their family ministry? Why aren't they going along to learn from their parents as I learned from Mamaw? Why aren't they learning the simple lesson that they are a part of something bigger than themselves?

Before the pastoral families feel targeted (I know you get enough of that!), what about other families? Why are the families always running and never doing anything for the kingdom of God? Could it be because we are confused about what a family is to do and be? Could we be confused about the call to *family ministry*? Why not give children a heritage of being part of something much, much bigger?

In our family, our children are a crucial part of how God is going to minister *through our family*. We depend upon our children filling their roles in our family. By doing so, we are able to move beyond the everyday mundane things to add ministry full-time into our family life. We could never do so if our children did not have the importance of their roles instilled upon their hearts.

Your children are the same. They need to know how important they are for making your family what it needs to be. They need to know that you depend upon them. It will minister to their heart as they come to understand that you need and depend upon them and their individual giftings to minister fully to others. As they realize their importance in the family, they will mature and step up to their call from God. What a blessing it is as they see things during difficulties that others don't see. They move toward ministering in those little things by just being *who* they are! What fulfillment as they use their understanding... wisdom... encouragement... service... protection...so on to minister to others.

Want To Inspire Your Children Toward Greatness?

The bells may be sounding. You see the need right here. But what on earth do you do?? How can we challenge our children toward greatness? Yes, you are right. This is a crucial

area of *our* ministry. It is one of the primary ways that we can minister to our children's hearts. To neglect this teaching and training is to fail in our most important calling. So, how do we begin?

Begin Young

Begin while they are young. Teach them from infancy to minister and serve. It may be as simple as playing quietly at Mommy's feet while Mommy listens to a weeping mother pour out her heart and offers biblical wisdom. It may be working hard together with Mommy to clean the house just for *Daddy*. It may be helping Mommy with baby brother while Mommy listens to sister read her story aloud. It may be making cards for a family who has just lost a baby while Mommy and sister make a meal. One thing is for sure. *All* children will love to minister and serve *if* it is our heartbeat and our way of life *and* if it is shared with them!

Use Their Spiritual Gifts

Use those spiritual gifts. Yes...you read right! This is not to get doctrinal, but I have found that my children had inborn giftings and bents *even* before they were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. *Now*, the anointing is different after salvation, but the giftings were there...ready to be used. There is no greater training ground than the home to use those spiritual gifts. There have been times that *my* day has been so much better just because my children ministered to *me*! The day that I fell down the stairs (*Ugly sight!*). I had a table *full* of precious cards, flowers, and goodies prepared especially to brighten my day by my little encourager/server Elisabeth. The night that all I could do was cry from the grief of losing my little baby, yet Elisabeth would not hear of me doing anything but lying down in her lap to cry while she rubbed my head. She just naturally serves and encourages. If I squelch this gift, she is broken bit-by-bit. If I use this gift in our home, I am relieved from much effort *and* she is ministered to as she ministers to others!

Matthew is much the same way. As he pours out his gifts, he is fired up and ministered to. There is *no* greater frustration for him than to be squelched in the spirit. There is something within him that *needs* to be sharing and discussing great thoughts. He has one of the strongest gifts of discernment and true wisdom that I have ever seen, especially at his age. His giftings are not just for "when he is older." They are needed *today* in our culture! To ignore his giftings today would result in a void in our family ministry and frustrate, possibly exasperate, this mighty man of God in these fruitful years. *NOW*...today... in our home...is the perfect time for him to begin using his gifts!

The home is the perfect training ground for using these spiritual gifts. Why? For one thing, **in the home we learn how to use our spiritual gifts with right motives.** If we are wanting to serve in order to get credit or be seen, we learn very quickly that little things that we do in the home are often taken for granted and overlooked by the very ones that we do them for. We learn that the real reward is not in the acknowledgment or appreciation, but in the satisfaction of ministering to others. We soon find ourselves much like Paul describes another family in 1 Corinthians 16: 15, *“that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.”* This is what **we** want for our home to be like—a family addicted to ministering to others—even while the children are at home!

Crucify ALL Flesh

The home is also the perfect training ground for learning ministry while getting rid of the flesh. Far too many well-meaning and enthusiastic Christians jump into “ministering” for the kingdom before they have developed maturity in the Word and dominion over their flesh. In turn, they use their knowledge as a sledge-hammer over the heads of innocent bystanders. They turn the church into a house of judgment, works, and strife instead of grace, peace, maturity and true growth.

Training in the home would help in this area. I have to admit that there are more times than I could detail in this small book that my children have used their knowledge to hurt others rather than bring true conviction and restoration. This is very difficult to overcome—speaking from my own *experience!*) This is where I have been able to step into the gap and train them in the way that God would handle their situation. I can show them how God *always* gives truth while extending grace. More times than I can recount, the simple heart matter always seems to be that they were walking in their flesh using their gifts rather than walking in the Spirit of God. I know this one especially well because this is one of my personal quirks in my walk with God! (EEK!)

Want to see what one looks like when walking in the flesh rather than the Spirit? Oh, think about the gifted encourager...they are the first ones to be depressed. Think about the true prophet...they are the ones with words and judgment that cut to the bone. Think about the little servant who wants recognition and fame for what they do. Think about the giver who won't trust God for a new venture. Think about the discerner who picks everyone to pieces. Think about the teacher who is loud and offers insights without regard to the receptivity of someone's heart. Oh, and don't forget Miss Mercy who develops a co-dependency with those she could really help!

No Greater Training Ground

If our children are to develop true greatness, there is no greater training ground than the home to prune away the flesh while nurturing the spirit! There is no greater place for our children to learn the beauty and fulfillment of ministering quietly and consistently.

If you want for your children to be challenged to greatness, it all begins in those little moments in your home where you do the little, unseen things that God has called *you* and *your* family alone to do. Greatness comes from those years of depending on your children to do the little things...letting them know that you trust them enough to be a part of what you do...and daily training them to use their gifts to minister to others, beginning with others *in your OWN home!*

Yes, if you want for your children to be great then remember in all you do, big or small that *"whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister."*

Life and Death Are In The Tongue...The Incredible Power of YOUR Words!



"Death and life are in the power of the tongue..."
Proverbs 18: 21

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom: and in her tongue is the law of kindness."
Proverbs 31: 26

Let's go back in time...back to the beginning. The very beginning! If you can stretch your mind a little bit, think of no people, no animals, no flowers, no trees, no light, no world, nothing but darkness and the God-head.

Imagine if you can the very moment before creation...

Then imagine...God *spoke*...*"Let there be..."* And it all began! Words have power!
"Death and life are in the power of the tongue!"

God, Himself demonstrated in the power of words in those first moments of creation...His Words had the power of Life! Think of that for a moment...there was nothing. Absolutely nothing in existence but God, Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. Yet, God spoke all that we know and see, hear, feel, and smell into existence! What power in words! The power to create!

In the passage above, we find that not only can words bring life, but they also have the power to bring death and pain. A study on the tongue through Scripture shows us that there is much power, destructive power, in the tongue, that *"Behold, we put bits in the horse's mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm (rudder), whithersoever the governor listeth (pilot wanteth). Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the*

course of nature; and is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the seas, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." (James 3: 3-8) Animals can be tamed...ships can be directed...yet, the tongue cannot be controlled (Well, without walking in the Spirit!).

Yes, the tongue is quite an interesting member of the body. Look at some different Scriptures about the tongue, words, and our mouth...

Power, Power Tremendous Power...

Words can be treasures for life...Proverbs 25:11

A wholesome tongue brings life...Proverbs 15: 4

Words can turn the heart: toward anger or away from wrath...Proverbs 15: 1

• Words can minister to the weary...Isaiah 50: 4

The wise spread knowledge through their lips...Proverbs 15: 7

• Words can be good and bring joy...Proverbs 15: 23

We can purpose *not* to transgress and destroy with our mouth...Psalm 17: 3-4

If we want to be righteous, have life, and see good, then we must watch over our tongue and keep it from evil! Psalm 34: 12-15

Our words should be used to edify and minister grace to others who hear us...Ephesians 4:29

The wise woman is careful about her mouth to open her mouth with wisdom and communicate kindness through her tongue...Proverbs 31: 26

Sin can always be found in the midst of a multitude of words...Proverbs 10: 19

• There is great value in the words of wisdom from the righteous, they *feed* many...Proverbs 10: 19-20

Whole cities can be overthrown just by the mouth of the wicked...Proverbs 11: 11

Speaking truth shows righteousness; a false witness shows deceit...Proverbs 12:17

Words can be just like a sword piercing...Proverbs 12: 18

• Words from a wise person are health...Proverbs 12: 18

Truth lasts forever; lies last just for a moment...Proverbs 12: 19

• A righteous person studies how to answer; the wicked pours out evil things...Proverbs 15: 28

Words of the pure are pleasant...Proverbs 15: 26

Words spoken at the appropriate time are good...Proverbs 15: 23

Our words can bring *us* joy...Proverbs 15: 23

The righteous uses knowledge correctly whereas a fool pours out foolishness...Proverbs 15:

- Words can break the spirit...Proverbs 15: 4
- The tongue can attack...Jeremiah 18: 18
- The tongue can defile the whole body...James 3:6
- A soft tongue can break the bone...Proverbs 25:15

• There are so many more! Are you seeing the power of the tongue? Those little words that just slip out? Words have power! The tongue has the power of life or death.

• Now take this home to your child. Your words to your child have power. You may praise and lift up your weary child with just a few simple words. Your seemingly, insignificant words may build up your little child from nothing, from obscurity to greatness. Those little words that you say all along the way, all throughout the years, are the words that speak approval, love, acceptance, and blessing! Who knows? Some quiet moment, in the midst of your busiest day, may be the moment that you speak the words that inspire them toward greatness. Your words, dear mother may be the very words of instruction that finally sink in to help them to succeed! Your words may be the words that serve as a rudder throughout their life to keep them on track as you help them to move toward their calling.

• Now...think about other ways that words may affect our children. It only takes a word to break a heart. Those little words that we *really* don't mean can pierce through the soul of our precious child. Just one little word, that is all it takes, can wound the spirit of a child. A multitude of words never seems to make up for that one little word. The sting of words has the power to build or tear-down. Perhaps few women set forth with a desire to tear a child to pieces, yet the same moment that could build-up a child can quickly turn into a demolition of a soul!

• Power! It is because of the power in our words that we must be very careful to minister to the heart of our children with words. Here are some keys for the mother wanting to minister to the heart of her child through words...

Learn the Value of Praise and Encouragement!

• Doesn't it just feel good when you *know* that you are right on track? Doesn't it fire you up to have just a little acknowledgment of the little things that you do? Think about a child and the impact that a little bit of praise can have in their lives. Our children struggle through their trials and often need just a touch of praise and encouragement to light the fire of enthusiasm to keep on trying hard to succeed!

Elisabeth probably sets the record as a toddler. She had constant experiences that I will never forget. One day she was "supposed" to be playing sweetly in her room while I finished up lessons with Matthew. She was so sweet and quiet on this particular day! (*What mother would not KNOW that something was up!*) As I finished up working for Matthew, we tidied up the room and I went toward the bedrooms to check on Elisabeth. Was I in for a surprise? As I walked into the hallway, I met my little, bubbly Elisabeth. Only was she a slime-ball...*really* (*Do you think I would call her a name in **this** chapter??!*)! She had taken a whole, complete, as in *full*, extra large jar of Vaseline (*getting the picture yet??*) and used it to cover her whole body (*NO! Her body was not that big! She just used A LOT!*) *and* her baby doll *and* the hallway *and*... Oops, in t-r-o-u-b-l-e!

Then, there was the day that once again, she was busily playing in her room. (*Hummm....*) I checked in only moments after walking by to check on her, I have no idea how she did it but the entire room was covered, immersed, showered with a huge layer of baby powder! She just grinned...then got *that look*...Oops, in t-r-o-u-b-l-e!

Then, there was that day...Oh! There were not just days and days...there were so many days that there were moments after moments. Trouble on every side!

Your children have the same story? Let's face it...it is really hard to be a child. They try so hard to be successful. They try so hard to please. Yet, more times than not, they mess up in trying to help.

Not long into motherhood I realized that my children would have entire months (and years!) that they struggled in spite of what they did. They would try to behave, only to snap in Wal-mart. They would try to clean, only to mess up more than was dirty in the beginning. They would try to entertain their friends, only to break rules in doing so!

What was key? What brought them through? Praise! Encouragement! Praise! Encouragement! And more praise and encouragement!

Let's face it...they knew what they did wrong. They just needed desperately to know what they were doing right! They felt guilty and defeated when they did wrong. They needed for those little successes to get as much attention, or more so, than their failures! They needed to be praised at least ten times as much as they were corrected or reproved.

Yes, on many days this meant that I was in a race to find things in their character and behavior that were praiseworthy. I had to search for those little things that I could notice that were actually good enough to offer encouragement. Some days were spent fishing

for things to praise! On many other days, I failed completely as I spent the whole day correcting, grumbling, sighing, and throwing my hands up!! Yet, the power in praise was immeasurable on those days that I could notice just the little things that they *were* doing well or finally learning!

Our greatest needs as human beings are the needs for love, affirmation, nurture, meaning, and purpose. We need to *know* that we are cherished. We need to know that we are good! We need to know what we actually are doing *right*! I don't know about you, but it is priceless for me to hear that a loved one actually sees little areas of my life that I am maturing or growing, especially if those are areas of past struggle and defeat!

Our children are just like us! Actually, they are even more tender than we are. They need *constant* assurance that they are on the right track. Little affirmations in word will carry them through when they are struggling along. Just a little praise makes a real difference in their lives. It is the difference between success and failure...mistakes and trying again...confidence and insecurity...contentment and frustration...peace and strife...broken heart or a child with a heart for God! Learn the value of praise and encouragement! Build your child with your praise and encouragement that comes from the depths of your heart and flows right into their ears!

BEWARE of Exasperating Them!

*"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath:
but bring them up in the nurture and admonition
of the Lord." Ephesians 6: 4...*

A while back I read a book by Reb Bradley, *Child Training Tips*. In this book, he described "25 Sure-fire Ways to Exasperate Your Children." Of course, I won't divulge how many of those I have successfully used in my own home! It is not that I *want* to exasperate my children, it is just too easy to pass that line. I believe that it is key for us to realize how easily exasperated our children can become.

In the footnotes of my Bible, I love what the author notes, "*Fathers can provoke their children to wrath by injustice, loss of temper, undue severity, cruelty, favoritism, suppression, sarcasm, ridicule, and misuse or abuse of authority. Nurture basically means "training," here denoting spiritual education. Admonition is instruction that points out one's responsibilities and duties.*"

Doesn't this get personal? If you did not find yourself in that list, you are an exception

to the rule! In spite of my heart's desire to minister to the hearts of my children, I fail! This is a heavy responsibility...to nurture and admonish without exasperating our children!

I believe that God is this straightforward because He truly *knows* the children and their deepest needs. They are tender. They need our affirmation, nurture, and encouragement even more so than our correction or instruction! It is vital. Very little correction or instruction will sink in if we are exasperating our children. How *do* we keep from exasperating our children?

Live a Cross-Life...

"I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Romans 12:1

First of all, I believe that we need to **live a "cross-life."** This requires that we go to the cross each and every day to crucify our flesh. Our flesh is so exasperating, even more so for our children than for us! They need to see us crucifying "self" each and every day. They need to see us learning how to ask forgiveness...admitting when we are wrong...and daily crucifying our pride and willfulness! Unless we do, we will find that our children will want very little to do with our beliefs...our lifestyle...our convictions...our God. They will become exasperated.

Deal With Problems...

"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil."

Ephesians 26-27

Second of all, it is our responsibility to **deal with problems within the home.** Praying about problems is great. Thinking about problems is great. Yet, looking at examples in Scripture, we can see how destructive it is within the home when a parent does not deal with problems in the home. Take a look at the stories of David (his daughter Tamar), Eli (his sons), Jacob (Dinah's rape) and Judah (Tamar), so on... As they turned their head ignoring the problems that their children were dealing with, they found much exasperation in their entire household.

One of the most precious things that we do for our children is serve as their protector and their means of justice in the home. Injustices in the home directly lead to much exas-

peration in our children.

Want examples?? Think about that older child who sees the "baby" in the family indulged, or worse yet, has to pay the penalty of the indulgence with added responsibilities to help make up for those parental indulgences. Sure, there may not be any problem for a while, but in time that child will sense the injustice of having to pull the load for the little one or getting in trouble when the little one should have been held responsible for their own actions. Burdens are not difficult until the child carries them over and over again... and the little one grows up to "never grow up" even when they are older...and cute wears off! All in the home are hurt by the injustice that a parent could have controlled.

What about that child who needs for you to come to their defense? Pain is pain. For the child experiencing pain, there is no greater blessing than a parent who will come to their aid. Children need to know that they are worth so much to you that you will do what it takes to protect them. They need to know that you will believe in them regardless of what it costs you. They need to know that if they need your help, you will be there for them. Children need someone who will defend them when they hurt. They need to know that we are on their side!

Avoiding the problems. Absorption in your own life to the detriment of the children. These lead your children down the path of rebellion and exasperation!

The Gift of Acceptance...

Finally, although I know there are many other causes of exasperation, **our children need our acceptance.** There is no greater way than verbalizing that acceptance. This will get real personal, but the main cause of perfectionism and criticism is just a simple lack of acceptance of "who" our children really are! Children want our blessing...our verbal blessing. Without our blessing, they will go for years looking for it in countless ways. In the end, unless we finally accept them as they are, they will become exasperated.

According to this Scripture, we are to avoid exasperating our children. We are to blame if our children are exasperated. They are to obey and honor. With this command, a great responsibility is placed upon the parents. We are not to "lord" over them...or take for granted their obedience...or to treat our children however we want to treat them. Instead, we are called to nurture. We are called to teach. We are called to help them to learn. We are called to help to remove those hindrances that inhibit our children. As we step up to our call, our influence becomes very important. So important that we treasure every moment with them, watching all we say or do, so we are sure to encourage our chil-