

Christ Community Covenant Church
Mothers – Authorized by God
Text: Isaiah 66:13 "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you."
Pastor Gloria Merritt – July 14, 2013

Hey, let's play a little game of fill-in-the-blank:

"If Mama ain't happy, ain't _____ happy." [nobody]
"What part of _____ don't you understand?" [NO]
"Just wait until your _____ gets home." [father]
"Be careful, your _____ is going to freeze like that." [face]
"No one said life is _____." [fair]
"Because I _____, that's why." [said so]
"I brought you into this world, _____." [and I can take you out!]
"If you want breakfast in bed, then _____ in the _____." [sleep in the kitchen]
"Close the door, were you _____ in a _____?" [born in a barn?]

Yeah, yeah, yeah, so a sermon about mothers. Yawn, right? I mean, most of the world even gets it – mothers are a good thing, and mothers SHOULD be good, right? Bad mothers are infamous and nobody wants to be one. But, if the world is also looking for good role models as mothers, how should our discussion today be any different? What distinguishes this conversation from those who don't serve Jesus as Lord of their lives? I believe it is this: for those not under God's authority, their practices and paradigms are influenced by whatever the latest parenting expert says – in the 60s it was Dr. Benjamin Spock, in the 70s it was Dr. Joyce Brothers, then fortunately, Dr. James Dobson came along, and then Dr. Laura, and I'm not even sure who the latest authority is! Each of those authorities definitely had good things to say, depending on their worldview, and yet it's incomplete.

While I am a mother, and many of you know I have given birth to six children, I don't feel like an authority. But that's not why I'm up here. In fact, there's no doubt that I have made LOTS of mistakes along the way. In fact, I have, in moments of weakness, done a few of the things that end up being discussed on Dr. Phil's show. Yes, at times, I've disciplined in anger, or said things that I wish had never spoken. There were times when I was at my wit's end, in tears before my Heavenly Father, while on my knees, and there were times when I wanted to run away! But, I can honestly say that I have been greatly blessed in the role of being a mother. And, any day now, I get to experience for the first time the role of being a grandmother and I'm pretty excited about that!

And, remember last week when Dave said we should celebrate baseball? Well, here's a little quote from Dave Barry involving baseball: If a mother has to choose between catching a fly ball and saving an infant's life, she will choose to save the infant's life without even considering if there is a man on base.

It is my prayer that after today's message all of you are encouraged, [a message of encouragement] because, life doesn't always turn out the way we had hoped or planned. Kids don't always turn out the way we'd hoped or planned, and Christmas letters can be depressing. Since I know for certain that all of you have had a mother, my prayer is that all of you can find a reason to thank God for your mother, that you can still pray for her and even bless her. For those of you who are mothers, or hope to be one some day, my prayer is that you will look to the Lord even more and depend upon Him even more for any of the mothering or grand mothering tasks you still have in front of you. Let's pause and pray...

"Heavenly Father, as always we look to the Authority of your written word, the Bible, for any discussion of how to live this life. I ask that you would grant all of us ears to hear and hearts to act upon what you would show us today. May we leave this place today encouraged and inspired to live for you and your ultimate glory. Amen."

In this series on authority, we have been emphasizing **what is God's authority** on these various subjects because we are concerned that our culture is very, very confused about all kinds of things. And, if we don't remind ourselves often of what God says on a matter, we too, will be confused.

Dave has been reminding us that there are 2 forms of authority – those **given by God and the kind of authority that is earned**. Those ideas are reflected in the definition of authority from the dictionary. When I looked it up, it was helpful to me. I ask you to think of mothers when you hear this definition and its various dimensions. Authority is: 1) The power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience; 2) The right to act in a certain way as delegated from one person or organization to another; 3) An expert; 4) Power to influence or persuade; 5) A confidence derived from experience or practice; a firm self-assurance. Would you agree that God has truly ordained mothers as a valid authority?

As we continue, let's look at a few of the areas in which I believe God has especially "authorized" or "commissioned" mothers to act on the authority that He has given them. Some of these areas apply to fathers, too, and sometimes it happens that whichever parent or grandparent is "in the moment," "in the place of influence" will be the one carrying out that particular role. Galatians 3:28 tells us that "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*" So, guys – don't check out! Your example and participation is just as much needed today.

Here are some areas I believe God has authorized mothers:

First, to **teach and impart wisdom**. This almost seems unnecessary to say, because even in the animal kingdom, we see mothers coaching and teaching their babies right from birth. It's wonderful to see! However, it IS a big job and many of us feel intimidated by it and sometimes we don't have willing students! And, whenever possible, it's a partnership between both mothers and fathers. Proverbs 1:8 says, "*My child, listen to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*" Those words are repeated in Proverbs 6:20.

Today, I recruited some help. I realized that there are so many mothers here at 4Cs that have wisdom to share -- far too many of them for me to include today -- but a few of them are going to share some of their biblical insights by way of video.

Along with teaching, God has authorized mothers to **correct** their children. Ah, this is definitely one of the less glamorous parts of mothering and there are lots of opinions out there as to how this should be accomplished. A lie that is perpetuated out in the world is that people are basically good. Scripture teaches us, however, that we have inherited a sinful nature and that we are basically self-centered, and, if left to our own devices, we live out the ruin caused by Sin. Listen to these words from Proverbs 29: 15 and 17: "*Correction and punishment make children wise, but those left to themselves will disgrace their mother.*" and "*Correct your children, and you will be proud; they will give you satisfaction.*" When children are out of control, society doesn't look well upon the parents, and mothers seem to get the brunt of the blame.

You know what I like least about being a mother? I like least that I am supposed to be a good example at ALL times. It seems like I never get a break from it. It doesn't matter if I'm tired, or moody, or have had a bad day – my kids expect me to rise above it all and display the very best ME that I possibly can. It doesn't seem possible, and frankly, it's not. But, God uses even that! He uses my failings to lead my children to Him, so that they need Him! But one proactive example we can set for our children is to **be rich in good deeds**. I Timothy 5:10 says that women who were worthy of extra honor are "*well-known for good deeds, for showing hospitality..., helping those in trouble, etc.*" Sometimes, doing good deeds simply means that we are faithfully changing diapers and wiping runny noses. Or, it means we are looking to the needs of elderly parents, or helping a neighbor in need, or sending a note of encouragement. Good deeds take on many shapes and

forms, and really it's a matter of asking God to use us each day, in a way that we can be his hands and feet.

This next area of God's authorization has been one of the most difficult parts for many women. It's difficult because of a woman's own sin and tendency to rebel, and because of the sin of men. Women have been called and commissioned to **love their husbands, to respect them, and to be examples of godly wives in front of their children.** It's a very good thing when we make our marriages a priority in front of the children. It teaches them that they are not the center of the Universe. But, it's not easy to do this when we have our own sinful nature to deal with. It's especially not easy when husbands have their own failings, and may choose to leave or abandon us, sometimes for another woman. It's incredibly painful and hard. The statistics tell us that this is so. We have families in our own congregations who have experienced this kind of brokenness. When that happens, what should the example be to our children? How do we model godliness to our children? [Godliness when life deals hard blows]

God has also commissioned us with his authority to **pass it on.** Where possible, we should seek to mentor others, which simply said is called Friendship. Women, seek out relationships with women of all ages! Some of these relationships may come from within your extended family. The book of Timothy gives this charge to both men and women. That's why 4Cs has men's ministries and women's ministries -- places to plug-in and connect with others. Titus 2:4 says "**then they [older women] can train the younger women...**" In the New Testament, Paul also acknowledges the influence that two women had on Timothy. Paul had come to love Timothy like a son, and it appears that little is known of Timothy's father -- we don't know the details about that. But, scripture mentions the sincere faith of his mother and grandmother. Their names were Eunice and Lois. Apparently, Paul wanted to honor and mention their influence on Timothy.

While there are many other areas, the last one I want to discuss today is that God has commissioned us as mothers to give **comfort.** It almost goes without saying. God has created mothers to be the source of life and nourishment to her children and He alludes to this in Isaiah 49:15 and 16. "**The LORD answers, 'Can a woman forget the baby she nurses? Can she feel no kindness for the child to which she gave birth? Even if she could forget her children, I will not forget you. See I have written your name on my hand.'**" [New Century Version]

Earlier in this series, Dave talked a bit about the Father heart of God; the fact that He is our heavenly Father, but here we see that God also has a Mother's Heart. Isaiah 66:13 says, "**As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.**" Kindness is a part of His heart and it's what He asks of us. Hear this from 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, "**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.**" What an encouragement! That's the text of this message that you have on the front of your bulletins. As mothers, as parents, we can comfort one another with the things we have received from God. We can be transparent with one another about our struggles because, there are no perfect parents. There are no perfect children. Mistakes have been made, mistakes will be made, and God uses those mistakes to draw us to Himself, so that we will depend upon Him.

I'd like to share a story about a time when I received God's comfort and encouragement during some of my own parenting. It's a wonderful thing when God comforts us! I share it in hope that it comforts you, too. Some of you have already heard me tell this before. About 12 years ago, one of our children was really rebelling and going through a lot of worldly stuff - and I mean a LOT. It was absolutely breaking my heart. It was especially hard because my husband and I had tried with all our might to do the "right" things that would prevent that sort of stuff, or so we thought. We sought the Lord with grief and tears and lots of prayers over our heartache. During that time, a relative was visiting us, and I took her up to Estes Park. We drove to the trailhead of Long's Peak, because I had always been intrigued by that mountain, and I wanted to get a closer

look, you know, just stand in its shadow, or something! So, in typical Colorado fashion, the road twisted and turned and climbed its way to the parking lot of the trailhead.

When we got there, I was fascinated by the fact that the parking lot was surrounded by dense pine trees. There was no sight of Long's Peak anywhere, nor of the winding road we'd just traveled. I was really surprised that we couldn't see Long's Peak looming above us over the treetops -- after all, it IS a 14'er! I was kind of dumbfounded. My perspective was skewed. In that moment, I distinctly heard God speak to my heart. I hadn't been thinking at all about our child and the current circumstances, but God used the moment to speak to those circumstances. He told me that our child's life was very much like that moment when my view was limited -- I was so focused on the current situation and its distresses -- I was focused on all those trees, when in fact there was a winding road that had led to that situation and there was a wonderful, although difficult trail ahead which led to a spectacular view yet to come. In that moment, God comforted my heart and assured me that the story wasn't over yet; and that there was much more to come. He assured me that I could trust Him as the author and finisher of my child's story. In that moment I received incredible peace as a mother, and the burden of the circumstances was greatly lifted, and I was truly grateful for God's comfort.

Sometimes we forget about God's kind, mothering heart. Romans 2:4 says, ***"Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?"***As mothers, as parents, surely we can relate to God's heart when we have seen that our kindness often helps a child to realize they've done wrong and that their actions need correction. [A mother's kindness can lead to repentance. A mother's prayers can lead to repentance.]

BENEDICTION – Proverbs 31: "As charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, a woman who fears the Lord shall be praised!"