

Leaving a legacy:

(This talk was given by Michelle to a MOPS group in Colorado Springs, Colorado and has been transcribed for this site.)

Welcome! As you know motherhood provides some of our greatest tests and greatest joys. As mothers, we must realize that our children are gifts to us from God and we are merely their caretakers. Truly parenting is a “trip!” We WILL make mistakes. Now that I have children of my own I have called my mother and apologized to her for whatever I might have put her through during my years of growing up.

Dozens of mothers say they wish they could do it again properly or change something, many things. Many parents feel they’ve done everything right and still had it blow up in their faces with the outcome of their children. We only have a short time to impact and influence our kids’ lives (positively or negatively) by our actions and REactions to those around us.

Our children were God’s children before they were ours. Believe it or not he loves them more than we do. He knew them before they were in the womb (Jer. 1:5). Hannah knew this best and although barren she prayed for a child. 1 Sam 1:27- “for this child I prayed and the Lord granted my petition. Perhaps there are some of you here that were also told you could not have children, prayed and now have a miracle terrorizing your house and mesmerizing your heart at the same time.

My mother has eight children. Of which I am the oldest. We are all happy, healthy, attractive, serving the Lord people. How did she do it? I asked her once having my own children. She said, “I gave my children to the Lord.” Dedicating means: we will not only depend on the Lord to help us bring them up but that we will accept our children as God made them.

My daughter was born a self-willed child. She came out kicking and screaming and demanding her rights be known. She is one of these children that truly enjoys time-out because it means she’s getting the special attention that no one else is getting. She is an overachiever. All great traits for a woman in a man’s world, not so great for a mother dealing with a three year old or a teenager. However, these are the traits that God has instilled in her, that He may use in her to change the world someday. Who am I to quench that spirit in her to make my life easier for today? I have had to learn how to accept her as she is and still demand the respect due to a parent. It has been a long but fairly successful road so far.

As women we do a lot. We are responsible for teaching our children, nurturing our marriage, ministering to others, attending Bible studies and church activities, etc. Perhaps you even handle the family finances, meal planning, are a friendly neighbor or take care of an aging parent. Your pace of living is probably like mine – hectic and stressful at times with kids, school, job, other obligations, and perhaps you try to squeeze in some personal goals (mine is losing weight- where does that even fit in?) I always have a running list of things to do. Check off a few and add a few more.

Our business can actually become the enemy of our souls. (**Being Under Satan’s Yoke**) add stress like teenage rebellion, marriage problems, finances, illness, etc. and it makes one wonder “Where is this abundant life Jesus spoke of?” Unfortunately Satan’s intent is to cripple us when we are most vulnerable, to make us feel we don’t measure up, that we are no good. One of his favorite tactics is to try to distract us from God’s plan and purpose for our lives by tempting us to compare

ourselves, our lives and our circumstances with others. That's why it is so important for us to know what God has for US to do.

Joyce Meyer always talks about how she wanted to be a worship leader and she was convinced that is what God wanted her to do. So she set out to do what she felt was her "calling" and become a worship leader but she was not getting anywhere and was not being blessed. Eventually she realized that she was meant to minister just not through song. She was called to "preach" and we see how God has blessed her through that anointing.

We all have unique gifts but few women view themselves as "gifted." Maybe that's not surprising, given the way society defines "gifted." We define gifted as: brilliant, elite, beautiful, the privileged, the few who are tapped into a special gene pool or club. This leaves the "ordinary" feeling inadequate. But ladies, God uses "cracked pots."

God has a unique and special plan and purpose for your life. It may simply be to sow into your child, to raise him or her to be a mighty man or woman for the kingdom of God and send them out. Whatever God's plan is for you no one else can fulfill it. It's not like God found someone else to take Moses and Gideon's places. They said, "No, send someone else." But God had a purpose that only THEY could fulfill. You have all that you need to fulfill your purpose. There is nothing lacking you. The enemy wants to hinder your journey of fulfilling your destiny by distracting you with fear, doubt and unbelief.

In 1997, I had a hysterectomy and was petrified. Mostly because I was afraid they were going to give me enough anesthesia for my body weight and I am a lightweight when it comes to drugs. It takes very little of anything to do a lot to me. But my doctor was adamant about me not waking up mid surgery and insisted that the appropriate dose would be administered. The day of my surgery I was all prayed up, had written letters to my children in case I did not come out of surgery alive and just in case the doctor, who assured me he had done hundreds of these, had forgotten who he was dealing with I written on the bottom of my feet (on one foot) two kids – (on the other) need me. There was no way I was going to let this doctor think of me as just another routine hysterectomy surgery. It took me quite awhile to come out of the anesthesia due to the amount I had endured but when I finally lifted my groggy eyelids and woke up my nurse was opening the blinds in my room. As the sun peered through the cracks in the mini blinds I thought to myself "I'm alive!" The nurse upon my awakening told me I'd missed all the excitement and proceeded to tell me of Princess Diana's death. Princess Diana and I shared the same birthday. We were exactly the same age. Although I was saddened by the death of such a lovely person I was rejoicing inside at the fact that I was alive and looking at the sun shining through the window, able to leave a legacy for my children after all.

The masterpiece, the legacy, we are molding is partly determined by the choices we make at any given moment. Your legacy can only be accomplished moment by moment. Someone has influenced us all in our lives. Whether negatively or positively – words spoken by parents, teachers, peers and even strangers begin to form a picture in our hearts of who we are. Sometimes messages are derived from absence of words and warmth. By the time we reach our teenage years, experts tell us, each of us already has formed most of our beliefs about ourselves. By then on our interpretation of the message around us, we have decided whether we "measure up" and our personal identity is generally, in place. I want you to understand the impact you have on those around you – just by being.

Choose to bring light and love. Choose to leave a positive legacy. Your speech can bless your children, your actions can strengthen your marriage, your prayers will move mountains in lives

and your character will influence others. Don't worry if it doesn't happen overnight. We are all works in progress. I encourage you to continue to press forward with passion, pursuing the depths of who you were created to be. Realize the work God is doing in you is an ongoing, evolving process of growth toward maturity. Release the frustrations you may have about yourself and the fact that you don't have your "act together". What matters is that you leave where you are today and move on to the next step. Continue to develop and define and refine your life and character and the legacy you wish to leave behind.

You CAN influence your legacy and purpose, either for good or bad. No one else has the power to keep you from fulfilling your destiny. It does not matter what others may say about you or what they have done. None of that can keep you from fulfilling your destiny and leaving the legacy you desire. I challenge you to love the way you want to be loved. Gandhi said it best when he said, "Be the change that you want to see in the world." You cannot harvest something you do not plant. Start today by making choices that will contribute to a future worth having.

Serve others unselfishly. Give and expect nothing in return. Your children will see this trait. Be an example. My stepfather used to flip a bird at any car that passed him on the street. I once knew a guy who cussed at a car in the parking lot AT CHURCH for cutting out in front of us as we were leaving after service. Both these situations and these people had an impact on my life and me - but in a negative way. So how do you respond to someone having a bad day? Do you respond or react? Make choices that count. Monitor your motives. Focus on being not doing!

God has a vision for your life. Look for the blessings. Buy a blessing book and everyday find at least three things you are grateful for. Some days will be more difficult than others but soon you will start noticing even the smallest things. Write out your plans for your children. Pray for them. Pray for their spouses. Take time in your busyness to rest. Look at it as an investment in the legacy you are leaving. Rest your souls – not just your mind, body and eyes.

You carry one of the greatest gifts to change lives...the power to be a blessing. *(from page 91 God, Are you listening?) What are we teaching our children? The generation that will take care of us when we are old and incapacitated? That will run our country? Have we taught them the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you?" It's such a simple rule. Unfortunately, its almost become a cliché'. What example have we set for our children to follow? I try to instill this in my children no matter the age or circumstance they are in. Someone is a bully, someone is rude, he broke my heart, she's being bossy - whatever the scenario, the answer is simple. We often judge others by their actions, but want to be judged by our intentions. We want mercy for us but judgment for them. What if we stop casting the first stone and just start loving and giving to others? I want more for my kids.*

What examples have we set for them to follow? Like I said earlier, we often want mercy for ourselves and judgment for others. Our hearts were created to love. We, as women, are tender, emotional nurturers. *(from page 93 God, Are you listening?) I challenge you, when sitting at a stop light...pray; when waiting for your child in front of the school yard, or slowing down at a school crossing...claim that school for Christ, even if you don't have children that attend there; when standing in the grocery store...pray for the person in front of you. Make a game out of it if you must and see how many times a day you can pray. Then try to beat your record the next day. It doesn't take much and it will make a difference. The enemy wants us to be too busy to pray.. too busy to notice, let alone care.*

If you feel ever overwhelmed, guess what? Jesus did too. Mark 6:31 tells us that Jesus said "let's go away and rest for awhile." Taking a break is NOT a waste of time it is a time of refueling. My

mother used to lie eight pillows in a row on the floor every afternoon and make us lie down for 20 minutes while she would sit in a chair and read or paint or just sit back with her eyes closed. That was her “refueling” time I suppose everyday.

So pass the torch of power, of being a blessing to the next generation by leaving a legacy worthy of noting. Believe it or not there is a high purpose and calling placed on your life - from God. This calling is activated the moment you place yourself, your life, your belongings and your children into his hands. The legacy will be there no matter what you do, say or believe or don't do, say or believe. Choose to leave a legacy that makes a *positive* difference in the lives of your children and others you meet along the road of “motherhood.”

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