

FROM FRUSTRATION TO FRUITION

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Prov.31:10-31

The field of psychology has come into its own in recent years and one of the things it has shown us is that there are certain hard-core needs which are common to all people. Needs which are so fundamental that unless they are satisfied, there can be no peace or happiness. Psychologists call them the three A's:

Affection.

Approval, and

Acceptance.

Every person who has ever lived came into this world with an innate need for these three ingredients. Thwart them and there is frustration. Satisfy them and there is fruition.

The achieving of true self-realization is a dual responsibility. There is much which can be done for us. There is also much we can do for ourselves. And, in celebrating Mother's Day, it's important we remember that fact. A great deal of what I will say this morning is addressed to the husbands and children in our audience, but certainly the wise mother and wife will read between the lines and discover there the outline of her responsibility to herself.

How can we help the women in our lives to find fruition and fulfillment? One obvious answer is that we can do our dead level best to supply the affection, approval and acceptance which they both need and deserve.

Affection

We all know the value of a Mother's love. We recognize the fact that, in some mysterious way, God has planted within the soul of a Mother an amazing capacity for giving love to her brood. But, how many of us have taken pause to consider her need of receiving love?

The summer before we came to Morgan Park a woman, who had been a family friend for a number of years, came to me for counseling. Although we had never talked about it before, I had felt for some time that, judging by the way she acted, she was struggling with insecurity and was burdened by a terrific sense of inadequacy.

We talked a little bit about some of the things which might be the source of her frustration and, as she thought about it, she advanced this conclusion:

“I guess I feel the way I do because, while my husband is a good man and has supplied every material thing I have ever needed, never once in all the years of our marriage have I heard him say, ‘I love you.’”

Little did that husband know the damaging effect of his diffident attitude. His home was disintegrating before his eyes and he was too blind to see it. The woman he had pledged to “love and cherish” was literally withering away from the eroding effect of emotional malnutrition. She was starved for affection.

With the faithfulness of a mongrel pup, she fulfilled her wifely duties which her husband accepted without a word. Never knowing whether or not she was pleasing him, she tried all the harder. The more she tried, the greater became her sense of inadequacy, until at last, flooded with frustration and on the verge of nervous collapse, she turned to the church for help.

When her husband was confronted with the reason for her plight, he expressed dismay. Of course he loved her. Hadn’t her shown her in a thousand ways? But, as he thought it through, he began to see he had been so taken with her capacity to give love, he had failed to recognize how great was her need to receive love. He was a proud man, but he was also a wise man. By simply administering generous amounts of the healing balm of little words of kind affection, he restored his wife and the mother of his children to health and happiness.

This case is no isolated instance. Again and again, more times than we care to admit, a husband's refusal or a child's neglect to give affection has resulted in broken hearts.

It is such a little thing, but so are the rivets which hold the great steel beams of a bridge together. Without them, the structure would collapse. And, unless a home is held together by the golden rivets of love, it will not stand against the storm of life.

Our wives and mothers need and deserve our love. For he who has a virtuous wife has a treasure of untold wealth.

“Her price is far above rubies” (Prov. 31:10).

And we will do well to tell her so as often as we can.

Along with what we say, there must also be an effort to become the fairy princess or knight in shining armor she thinks we are.

I came across a sweet little poem this week which expresses this thought in a very simple, but effective, way.

“While walking down a crowded
city street the other day,
I heard a ragged little urchin
to his comrade turn and say;
'Jimmy, let me tell youse
I'd be as happy as a clam
If I wuz only the feller
That me mother thinks I am.

“She thinks I am a wonder
And she knows her little lad
Would never mix with nuthin’

That wuz ugly, mean or bad.
“Oh, lots of times I sit and think
How nice ‘twould be, Gee whiz,
If only a feller wuz the feller
That his Mother thinks he is.””

My friend, be yours the life of toil
Or undiluted joy;
You still can learn a lesson
From this small unlettered boy.
Don’t try to be some earthly saint
With an eye fixed on a star;
Just try to be the fellow
That your mother thinks you are.”

Certainly there is nothing you children can do to prove your real affection and love for your mother than to demonstrate that love in Christian living. The greatest compliment you can pay her is to make her God your God, her ideals your ideals, and, as far as is humanly possible, strive to be “the fellow or the girl she thinks you are”.

Approval

A second way in which we can help our wives and mothers move From Frustration To Fruition is to provide the approval they need.

P. L. Cuyler pointed up the immeasurable worth of a mother’s influence when he said
“God made mothers before He made ministers!”

And no one can erase the lines which have been drawn in our character by the indelible influence of a mother’s hand.

We may make light of the fact that we are tied to mother's apron strings, but we never forget the fact that, like hoops of steel, they have held us to life's highest ideals. And blessed are the apron strings of a mother if they bind her offspring to the Christ of God.

“A builder builded a temple,
 He wrought it with grace and skill,
Pillars and groins and arches,
 All fashioned to do his will.

“And men said, as they saw its beauty,
 ‘It shall never know decay.
Great is thy skill, O builder!
 Thy fame shall endure for aye!’

“A mother builded a temple
 With infinite, loving care,
Planning each arch with patience,
 Laying each stone with prayer.

“None praised her unceasing effort,
 None knew of her wondrous plan,
For the temple the mother builded,
 Was unseen by the eye of man.

“Gone is the builder's temple,
 Crumpled into the dust.
Low lies each stately pillar,
 Food for consuming rust.

“But the temple the mother builded

Will last while the ages roll,
For that beautiful, unseen temple
Was a child's immortal soul."

Mothers have always been the makers of men. It is true that

“The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.”

For the high priestess of the house is the custodian of our educational, moral and religious life.

And when the last page of our world's history has been written, the most imposing chapter will be the one entitled, **“The Influence of Christian Mothers”**

Oliver Cromwell said his mother's influence was more than that of all the people with whom he had come in contact. When he became ruler of England, he welcomed his mother to the palace at Whitehall where she lived with him. And when she died, she was buried in Westminster Abbey amongst the kings.

When President Garfield took the oath of office in 1881, he gave his mother what has now become famous as the “Inaugural Kiss”, as he embraced her before the assembled multitudes and, amid wild enthusiasm, said, “You, mother dear, are responsible for this.”

George Washington.

Calvin Coolidge.

Woodrow Wilson.

Henry Ward Beecher.

General Hooker.

Charles Dickens.

The list could go on and on as men of high and low estate, from every principality in power, step forward to testify to the influence of a Godly mother. Indeed

“Her children rise up and call her blessed.”

As these young people sang “The Ninety And Nine” this morning, they were singing more than a song. They were witnessing to the fact that a mother’s love knows no boundaries and will be stopped by no barriers. No shepherd ever equaled the compassionate concern of a mother for her children. And we know it!

Then why not tell her so? Why not rise up and call her blessed? Why not express the approval we really feel? Why not say, “Thank you” for the never-ending stream of little things she does in our behalf? Expressing our approval by a little word of thanks may seem small indeed, but it is just another way in which we can help these whom we love to move From Frustration To Fruition.

Acceptance

And then we must give her our acceptance. Here is a point at which we husbands must shine.

How many of us ever stop to think what we are really saying when we propose marriage to the girl we love? How many of us stop to analyze the nature of the career she accepts when she says, “Yes”.

A survey made by Bryn Mawr College points out that the average farm woman works 68 hours a week in household tasks. The average woman in the small town works 77 hours in similar tasks. Her sister, in an urban home, spends over 80 hours a week at duties about the house. Probably none of us were honest or realistic enough to get down on our knees and ask the charming love of our life if she was willing to work 80 hours a week for us for nothing. And yet, that’s precisely what we’re asking.

A young minister recently tried to estimate the magnitude of this career we call homemaking. He asked his partner in marriage how many times a day she went up and down the stairs. After some figuring, he arrived at the startling face that, over the years of their marriage, she would be climbing stairs equivalent to walking to the top of the Washington Monument 12,000 times!

He then went on to discover she would wash 150,000 cubic feet of soiled dishes, would wash and iron the clothes on a clothesline 47 miles long, with two extra miles of specialty items added for each baby.

It is true, of course, that the wives and mothers of today have many more gadgets to help them, but isn't it also a fact that the age of gadgets has so changed the mode of life that the care of the gadgets themselves have become a major chore!

There was a time in the history of the affairs of men when husbands could relegate their wives to a secondary standing and get away with it. But Christianity has changed all that. It has raised the level of womanhood. It has lifted her, inspired her, honored her, as it has opened the eyes of men to see that the contribution their wives make to the building of a home is equal to, if not greater than, the economic provisions which they make as breadwinner.

No longer can wives and mothers be thought of merely as "chief cook and bottle washer". They have earned the right to a full partnership. The man will still feel the responsibility of being temporal and spiritual leadership of his home. But remember, men, God instructed us to honor our fathers *and* our mothers. It takes both to build a stable home. It is a wise man who recognizes his limitations and balances them with the strengths of his life partner. By giving his wife the acceptance she has earned, he will create the teamwork which is essential if he, as well as his wife, would move From Frustration To Fruition.

The Need of Being Needed

And then this final word to mothers, wives and young women who are present this morning. As we've already said, complete fulfillment is a dual responsibility.

A man came to visit a relative and told the children of the home he was their uncle on their father's side. One of the children said, "I bet you won't stay there long when you discover you're on the wrong side!"

Well, this team play is a two-way street and wives and mothers are just as capable of thwarting it as are the men. Remember that!

Also remember that by learning to give affection, approval and acceptance you will better prepare yourself to receive them.

It's possible that in giving yourself you may be hurt. True love makes people vulnerable, you know. The woman who is truly in love reaches out beyond herself and exposes herself to injury and hurt. But, that's part of the high adventure. Only by giving yourself, by losing yourself in love for the people who are important in your life, will you truly find the meaning of fulfillment. It is another case in which

“the measure you give will be the measure you get” (Mark 4:24).

The greatest need any wife or mother has, is the simple need of being needed. When your family is beginning and your children are young, this need is completely satisfied. But when the youngsters have grown, have sprouted wings and flown away to build nests of their own, this need is awakened once again.

Sometimes it expresses itself in over-possessiveness or intrusion into the family life of your children. Sometimes mature women become brooding, whimpering children once again, trying to regain the place of prominence in their children's life. But this can never be.

What then of a mother's need for being needed? This tremendous drive must be channeled into new areas of interest. The relative freedom from responsibility makes possible extra hours which may be put to the service of mankind. You need never feel for one fleeting moment that you are no longer needed. There is still your husband and your home. There is still a world which is aching for a little bit of love. There is still the church which is taking halting steps when it might be making vigorous strides if Christian women were channeling a full measure of their discretionary time and energy into its service.

A little thought and imagination may be needed to arrive at an understanding of the things you can do; but believe me, there really is no limit to the possibilities of satisfying this basic need for being needed.

I know of one elderly woman who has made a lifetime ministry of babysitting for younger families who cannot afford to pay a baby sitter. They have the physical energy and strength to do the things she can no longer do for Christ and the church. By babysitting for free, thereby releasing them, she is having a part in everything they accomplish for the Kingdom of God.

Our own Mrs. Innes has made a full time ministry of visiting our shut ins. Having raised her family, she has created a whole new family of those who look to her for comfort and help. There are others who are doing similar tasks and there is a place for you in the Kingdom Enterprise if you will only give yourself and God a chance. Not only will there be an added new meaning and purpose to your life but, as you move From Frustration To Fruition, it will bring blessing into the lives of others and they, along with your own children, will “rise up and call you ‘blessed’”.

God bless Christian mothers. They are the salt of the earth. The diadem, the scepter, the robe, and the throne of honor are theirs.

“For favor is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who feareth the Lord, she shall be praised” (Prov.31:30).