

A Mothering Spirit

An experiment was performed in the U.S. in 1944. It involved forty newborns infants. Its purpose was to determine whether individuals could thrive only on basic physical needs being met without affection. Twenty were housed in a special facility where their caregivers came in to feed them, bathe them, and change their diapers, but that's it. They did not touch the babies or even look at them more than what was necessary. The environment was kept sterile with none of the babies becoming ill.

Yet, the study had to be stopped after four months because at least half had died. Just before expiring they would stop verbalizing and trying to engage with their caregivers. They generally stopped moving, crying, or even changing expression.

At a separate facility, the other twenty newborns were raised with all of the basic physical needs being met as well, but with this was included affection from the caregivers. No deaths were recorded. The babies thrived.

This should come as no surprise. We know from numerous examples in God's word the powerful effect of love. **And a mothering spirit is a loving, caring, engaging spirit.** To the degree that mothers and mother figures use their mothering spirit is the degree to which a family, a community, and even a nation can thrive. We will look at three examples.

1. Mothering a family

Lois and Eunice (2 Tim. 1: 3-5)

What God had given them was genuine faith. When a mothering spirit includes genuine faith, families thrive spiritually. This is what happened in my own family. God honors genuine faith, and created a heritage of spiritual life that came down generations.

2. Mothering a community

Deborah (Judg. 5: 1-2, 6-9)

The phrase “offered themselves willingly” means to **volunteer**. This glorifies God and brings blessing to the nation (vss. 2, 9).

The Canaanites drove Israel from the city gates where judgments were given, and expelled them from their towns. Verse 8 does not mean the Canaanites disarmed Israel. Barak’s army had weapons. It means the men were afraid to fight. In fact, Barak said to Deborah, “If you don’t go with me, I won’t go (4:8).

Deborah went with him, but she didn’t have to fight. She only had to use her mothering skills combined with her gift of prophesy. She prophesied God would deliver the Canaanite Commander Sisera into the hand of a woman, who we would later learn would be Jael (4: 9, 21). This gave the men courage to go forth, fight, and win.

3. Mothering an Economy

The Virtuous Woman (Prov. 31: 10-31)

This woman used her mothering gifts combined with her God-given business skills and creativity to provide for her family and develop a thriving business in real estate speculation (v. 16), and as an export supplier of home-made garments (v. 24). She caused the local economy to thrive.

When a woman uses her mothering spirit virtuously, she is trusted (v. 11, Ruth 3:11). Her reputation will bring her honor. Her gifts make room for her and bring her before great people (Prov. 18:16). Yet she was always willing to care for the poor as well (v. 20).

It should again be noted that this industrious woman never had to neglect her family to succeed with her business skills (v. 27-28). Above all, her fear of the Lord was at the core of her success (v. 30).