

Faces of Rejection (Part 4)

Rejected Mothers

I trust that you are engaging in robust conversations with regards to rejection issues. As we think of mothers this Mothers' Day, I believe it is useful to reflect on the nature of the rejection they experience. (On another occasion we will explore mother wounds, the rejection mothers inflict). It is important for mothers to process this rejection effectively and for the rest of us to minimize the rejection we inflict upon them. We live in a society where there are many social ills amongst young people, but there seems to be a paucity of research around the impact this has on the mothers of these young people. High risk behaviour amongst young people today is causing extreme anxiety in mothers. Disrespectful egalitarian mindsets have resulted in a lot of mothers feeling frustrated, hurt and drained. Teenagers often withdraw socially from their families and start spending more time with their peers. The result of this is a deep sense of loneliness and even fears of complete abandonment on the part of the mothers. In this message I am going to highlight some research findings with regards to the impact of rejection on mothers today. I will also share some biblical principles that will equip us in relating aright to our mothers and mothers in society. I exhort you to repent if you see that you have not been relating in a biblically honouring manner to your mother and mothers in general. *Prov 20:20 If someone curses their father or mother, their lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness.* How we relate to our mothers has consequences. The word curse here is *qalal* meaning to speak evil of, revile, or treat with contempt. Elsewhere Paul explains to Timothy that he should not rebuke an older man harshly but appeal to him as he would to a father. There is a way we treat our mothers and fathers.

The Depth of Crisis

I believe that mothers experience a very unique type of pain. When they are rejected by their offspring it is similar to the pain of betrayal. This is because they have done so much for their children in their formative years, but the children are not aware of this. It is easy for a mother, who is aware of all the hours of breastfeeding and carrying this child in her womb, to feel betrayed. What is also a challenge is that for many mothers the rejection is not just from their children but also from the father of the children. Many men are polygamists or have "small houses" on the side. Men tend to die earlier than their wives, so we have many widows today. Apart from the fact that in SA today only a small percentage of children live with their fathers, even for those that have husbands, many of them feel like they are raising the kids by themselves. This is due to the father's work commitments, social activities or emotional absence.

Characteristic	Mother in household	Father in household
Black African	74%	31.7%
Coloured	84.3%	51.3%
Indian/Asian	94.2%	86.1%
White	92.6%	80.2%

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I believe that mothers are called to incubate things. How can God have them birth the most precious things, people, yet not allow them to birth other things like business and churches? Because of what women carry, the enemy wants to wound them with rejection so that they lose heart and stop birthing things.

A. What does the Bible command or instruct with regards to relating to mothers?

It is important that we have a clear standard in our minds for how we relate to mothers. If not, we end up doing things stemming from cultural pressure without a solid biblical basis.

1. There is a blessing of longevity that is a result of honouring our mothers.

Exodus 20:12 - "Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."

Ephesians 6:2-3 - "Honour your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Think of what it means to “go well with you”. This is not just for Old Testament people, as Paul repeats it in Ephesians. It is important to note that this command is for how we relate to both fathers and mothers. We live in a society where fathers have been honoured to the extent of being feared whilst a lot of mothers are continuously disrespected and despised. This should not be so. Many mothers in homes today are treated like they are one of the kids.

2. Husbands and fathers in households set the tone for how children honour their mother.

Proverbs 31:28 - "Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her."

When did you last praise your wife in front of your children? Are you continuously dishonouring your wife whilst expecting your children to honour her?

3. There is a biblically appropriate way in which to treat your mother, older women and women in general.

1 Timothy 5:2 - "Treat older women as you would your mother, and treat younger women with all purity as you would your own sisters."

Verses like this demonstrate how the Gospel redeems the divine purpose of women. Look how Jesus was concerned about His mother’s well-being even when He was in excruciating pain on the cross.

John 19:26-27 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

It was the duty of the eldest son in Jewish culture to look after the well being of his mother after she had become a widow. He could have passed on this responsibility to His siblings, but He gave it to John. This might show that He was also interested in her spiritual well-being as His brothers had not yet come to faith. *Although John said that (at least at one time) Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:5), and Mark 3:21 records Jesus' family as being of the opinion (again, at least at one time) that Jesus was out of His mind, Acts 1:14 indicates that Jesus' brothers prayed along with Mary and the rest of the apostles in the Upper Room, following Jesus' ascension. (Tim Maas – ebible.com questions)*

4. We show honour to our mothers by taking them seriously.

Proverbs 23:22 - "Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old."

Be careful of ageism. We sometimes dishonour our mothers when they become quirky and develop a variety of proclivities as they age. "and do not despise" (al-tifneh) - do not turn away, reject, or disdain.

"Disdain" means to regard or treat something or someone with contempt, scorn, or disrespect. It can be a feeling of intense dislike or disapproval towards someone or something, often accompanied by a feeling of superiority or haughtiness.

Prov 1:8-9 Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. 9 They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.

Mothers have a God-given role to teach their children. This is not just for fathers. Her teachings must be taken seriously not discarded easily.

B. How does rejection from a child impact mothers today?

Disrespectful attitude: A study published in the Journal of Adolescence found that disrespectful behaviour from adolescents towards their parents was associated with higher levels of maternal stress and depressive symptoms (Kim et al., 2016).

Risk-taking behaviour: A study published in the Journal of Family Psychology found that mothers of adolescents who engaged in risky behaviour (such as substance use) reported higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms (Houck et al., 2017).

Emotional outbursts: A study published in the Journal of Research on Adolescence found that mothers of adolescents with high levels of emotional dysregulation reported more stress and poorer mental health outcomes (Hampel et al., 2019).

Social withdrawal: A study published in the Journal of Marriage and Family found that mothers of adolescents who spent more time with peers reported lower levels of emotional closeness with their children and higher levels of depressive symptoms (Collins et al., 2014).

Conclusion

It is important that young people look at these findings and make a decision to not become a statistic with regards to this. **Do not be the one that causes your mother to experience unnecessary pain and mental health issues.** Let's pray for mothers who have been wounded. Let's pray that their identity will be in Christ and not in how they are treated by those around them. Let's pray that they don't carry guilt that is not theirs due to a heightened sense of responsibility. The breakthrough comes when you see that you are stewards of what belongs to God. Let's also repent for where we have rejected our mothers and mothers in general. Let's repent for where we have downplayed the office of motherhood.

References

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