

## MOTHER'S DAY: WHAT MATTERS MOST

Happy Mother's Day. Here at CVCHURCH we honor, value and love every woman here, whether you're a mother or not. We esteem you as women who are created in the image of God, and we need every one of you.

I read a new study done by Barna Research written in April of 2018. It is entitled, **“The Powerful Influence of Moms in Christians’ Households.”** Acknowledging the influence of moms isn't just the stuff of Mother's Day cares; it also became a major finding and theme in a recent Barna study of practicing Christians' homes in the U.S. The Households of Faith report, produced in partnership with Lutheran Hour Ministries, finds that, **“Mothers—more often than fathers, or any other category of frequent participants in households—are seen as the confidants, providers of support and drivers of faith formation. We observe this dynamic in the responses of adults, who esteem and rely on their moms as sources of strength, companionship and wisdom. In turn, mothers still meet a range of needs and provide support for their grown children and, when applicable, grandchildren. But some of the clearest examples of the broad impact of mothers surface in the responses of Gen Z, who offer a portrait of mothers who are present, passionate and faithful.”** This report discovered some of the clearest examples of the broad impact of mothers surfaced in the responses of Gen Z, children born between 1995 and 2015. They are currently between 4-24

years old—nearly 74 million in the U.S. The following categories are where you moms impact our children. This is amazing to me. I do see this with Kathe and our two adult kids, especially with Whitney. **1) Moms are primary activity and conversation partners for teens; 2) Teens go to moms for tough conversations and personal support; 3) Mothers are the main spiritual coaches for teens. “Over and over this study speaks to the enduring impact of mothers—in conversation, companionship, discipline, and, importantly, spiritual development.”**

Here are how the generations break out. I find this incredibly fascination. I thought you might like this info.

**Baby Boomer: Were born between 1944 and 1964.**

**They’re currently between 55-75 years old (76 million in U.S.)**

**Gen X: Were born between 1965-1979 and are currently between 40-54 years old (82 million people in U.S.)**

**Gen Y: Or millennials, were born between 1980 and 1994. They are currently between 25-39 years old.**

**Gen Y.1= 25-29 years old (31 million people in U.S.);**

**Gen Y.2= 29-39 (42 million people in U.S.)**

**Gen Z: Is the newest generation to be named and were born between 1995 and 2015. They are currently between 4-24 years old (Nearly 74 Million in U.S.)**

My goal is to encourage all of you women, and my target is for all the women here with children, or you’re expecting, or you desire to have children someday. I want you to see just how important your role is to your children, culture,

community, church, and all the men in your life. With your roles being so strategic as a woman I want to share with you what I think the Bible says, “**What Matters Most**”. To know what is most important in life and then to give your energy, time and commitment to it is the most important thing you can do with your life. To live your life on purpose is what Jesus said is what your life is to be all about.

## **I. Live a lifestyle of love**

This is what Jesus said is the most important endeavor that you can give your life to—as a woman, as a man; as a mother and as a father; as a friend, neighbor, employer, employee; as a brother and sister in Christ. When Jesus was challenged concerning what was the most important commandment of the 613 at that time from the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, Jesus doesn’t hesitate in giving His answer in Mark 12:29-31, “**The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord.’<sup>30</sup> And you must love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’<sup>31</sup> The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.” Jesus was very clear in what matters most for Him and for each one of us. **All of life revolves around relationships.** Relationship with your God who gave His Son for your sin so that you can have a personal relationship with your Heavenly Father. Nothing is more important—women, moms—than your children, grandchildren and the men in your life seeing that you have completely committed your life**

to loving, serving, adoring, worshipping, and obeying Jesus Christ and His will for your life. The people in your life need to know that you have completely sold your life out to pursue God with every fiber and ounce of your being. Why? Because that is why you were created. Your children and everyone you relate to so desperately need to see that the very ground of your being is your willingness to let the love of the Father fill your life to overflowing and then you impact them with His love. Notice that Jesus says in verse 31 that the 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment is equally important to the first. Love your neighbor as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these. Mothers, the most important task in your life every moment of every day is to commit your life to living a lifestyle of love. This means as you go throughout your day you're thinking, "What is the loving thought, feeling and actions that I can communicate to You, Father God, and to those I come in contact with?" In John 13:34-35 Jesus says, **"So now I am giving you a new commandment. Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are My disciples."** It is so important, with all of the stress, anxiety and tension that you can experience at any given moment, to keep in the forefront of your mind that there is no greater endeavor you can be involved in than to live a lifestyle of love. It is so important, moms and grandmothers, that you are developing a deep awareness of the presence of Jesus and of His purpose and His power, because the Bible says, what the research I read to you confirms, that you are the primary activity and conversation partners for your teens and for others. Moms, your teens go to

you for tough conversations and personal support. This is such an important role and responsibility God has given you. It is mandatory that you are turning to Jesus every moment of every day so that you are receiving His love, acceptance, forgiveness, wisdom, knowledge, and insight so that you have something that wrecks of heaven when you engage your children, your spouse and your friends. Mom, you are the main spiritual coach for your teen. You have an endearing impact in the conversation, companionship, discipline, and spiritual development of your children. You want all this activity to be bathed in a lifestyle of love.

## **II. List what God defines as love and act on it**

In the book of 1 Corinthians Paul is addressing some sinful and unhealthy thoughts and actions that were taking place in the Corinthian church. They were arrogant and boasting that they were so spiritual, and yet they were thinking and doing things that were antithetical and contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Many scholars have called 1 Corinthians chapter 13, according to Gordon Fee, “...as a hymn to love as though ‘love’ were an abstraction, or worse, simply a beautiful sentiment. But for Paul, just as in 1 Corinthians 8:2-3, this is ethical instruction as the imperative in 14:1 makes plain. To the contrary the context and parenetic nature (ethical advice, instruction, and counsel) of the whole *demand that the concern be love for others.*” Paul’s incredible description of love is a rebuke and correction to

their opposing view of spirituality. Again, Fee is impeccable in setting up the background for one of the most profound articulations of what true love is and isn't. **“They speak in tongues, to be sure, which Paul will not question as a legitimate activity of the Spirit. But at the same time they tolerate, or endorse, illicit sexuality, greed, and idolatry (5:9-10; illustrated in 5:1-5; 6:1-11; 6:12-20; 8:1-10:22). They spout ‘wisdom’ and ‘knowledge’; but in the former they stand boldly against Paul and his gospel of a crucified Messiah, and in the latter they are willing to ‘build up’ a brother by destroying him (8:10-11). In short, they have a spirituality that has religious trappings (asceticism, knowledge, tongues) but has abandoned rather totally genuinely Christian ethics, with its supremacy of love.”** God is calling all of us to learn to love Him, our spouses, our children, and each other with how He defines love. You demonstrate that you understand and agree with God on what matters most when you develop your lifestyle based on His love by how He defines it, not how our culture or you yourself define it. When we talk about love in our culture, especially romantic love, we think in terms of love of our love interest meeting all our needs and making us feel the way we want to feel. If they don't, we feel unloved, and we blame our spouses, parents, children, the church, and our friends. Let's look at 15 characteristics of what Paul told the Corinthians this is how love acts and doesn't act.

**Love is: A. Patient.** The Greek word is macrothumia. **The word means to be long tempered.** Makros means long and thumos means temper or anger. Patience demonstrates a certain attitude towards people and events. Towards people it never loses patience regardless of how unreasonable they can be. It also expresses the attitude towards events which never admits defeat and never loses its hope and its faith no matter how dark the situation could be. Trench writes concerning patience, **“It’s a long holding out of the mind, before it gives room to action or to passion.”** T.K. Abbott says that patience is, **‘The self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong.’** Barclay writes, **“The Christian patience is not a grim, bleak acceptance of a situation, but it is patience that is lit up with joy.”** Patience is one of the hardest lessons for all of us to learn, because it means we must learn to wait. We don’t like to wait for anything. James 5:7-10 insists that the Christian must be like the prophets of old who again and again had to wait for the action of God. We must be like the farmer who sows the seed and who waits throughout the slow months until the harvest comes. Barclay writes, **“It may well be that this is the hardest task of all who live in an age which has made a god out of speed.”** Patience is the stuff of real, true, authentic love. It is not a sweet sentimentality that is based on emotion but God’s sacrificial love. It is patience that builds strong character in children when they are receivers of this aspect of love from mom, dad and those who are most important in their lives. It is God’s patience that provides the environment for all the changes we all want, desire and need to make.

**B. Kind.** The Greek word for kindness is Chrestotes. Paul writes in 2 Cor 6:6, **“We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us and by our sincere love.”** Plummer says Chrestotes in humans is, **“The sympathetic kindliness or sweetness of attitude that puts others at their ease and shrinks from giving pain.”** Wow, is that fantastic or what. Paul argues that these two virtues of love are the leading characteristics of God our Father. Romans 2:4 says, **“Don’t you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can’t you see that His kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?”** How might this change how you respond to your children regardless of their age? Your spouse? The people that are a struggle for you? Loved ones, especially this morning (afternoon), all of you precious women and mothers? This will start a revolution in your family and your relationships if you will take this to heart. Jesus says this is what matters most. Commit to purposefully living a lifestyle of love that is defined by God and act on it.

**C. Is not envious.** Envy is at the core of strife, division and confusion in relationships, especially in the family. Parents often time are at each other throats and will turn their children and grandchildren against each other. One of the worst abuses that takes place is to compare your children to each other and to others. I wish you were more like your sister, your brother or someone else. The message that is sent is you’re incomplete in yourself. You’re missing something. No matter how much you say you love your children or



spouse, you don't when you take this stance toward your spouse, ex or children. Love does not envy. Period.

**D. Does not boast.** Fee says, “**This rare word means literally, ‘behave as a braggart,’ or ‘be a windbag.’ It suggests self-centered action in which there is an inordinate desire to call attention to oneself.**” True love does not do this. If you find yourself talking about yourself too much to your kids, grandkids or spouse, this is not love.

**E. Is not proud.** Fee writes, “**This word means to be ‘puffed up,’ carrying with it overtones of arrogance.**” When you insist it always must be your way. When you're indignant and demanding your way, this is pride; this is not love. This is why I say that marriage and parenting are so difficult and the toughest relationships you can have. When we love like Jesus says to love, yes, you will find your best life. If you don't, this is why the divorce rate is so high—one out of two. Arrogance hurts our children and spouse.

**F. Is not rude.** This word means “**to behave shamefully or disgracefully.**” Fee writes, “**In this text it has to do with the women in the church at Corinth in 11:2-16 who brought shame on their ‘heads’ by attiring themselves so as to disregard the distinctions between the sexes, or the haves shaming the have nots at the Lord's table.**” When we shame our kids or spouse by bickering, nagging, manipulation, and stubbornness, this is not love.

**G. Does not insist on its own way.** This is another way of saying don't live your life to please yourself. The Bible says this is exactly what true love is all about as modeled by Jesus Himself. Romans 15:1b & 3, **“We must not just please ourselves.... <sup>3</sup>For even Christ didn't live to please Himself.”**

**H. Is not irritable.** True love is not easily provoked. This is critical with children and our spouses. It is absolutely stifling to live in a house where one or more of the parents or spouse is irritated a good portion of the time. It creates fear, anger and hate in those who are exposed on a regular basis. This is where patience is so critical.

**I. Keeps no record of wrongs.** Paul says here that the one who truly loves does not take notice of the evil done against him or her, in the sense that no records are kept. The genuine Christian waits for God to settle the score. This is very tough when it is your child who betrays you, or your spouse offends you. If you keep a record and you move into unforgiveness, you are not loving your spouse or child. Romans 12:19, **“Dear friend never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, ‘I will take revenge, I will pay them back,’ says the Lord.”**

**J. Does not rejoice in wrongdoing.** The loving person refuses to delight in evil, as Fee says, **“Either in its more global forms—war, the suppression of the poor or in those close to home, the fall of a brother or sister, a child's misdeed.”** True love does not take pleasure when someone

else falls. It doesn't say, "I told you so. You didn't listen to me."

**K. Rejoices when truth wins out.** Rejoices when the gospel wins out, and, in the family, when our children and spouse and friends respond to the evil done to them like Jesus. When they stand up to terrible circumstances, and they don't buckle and yield and quit, but they trust Jesus. A loving person stands with them.

**L. Love never gives up.** The New English Bible says, "There is nothing love cannot face." This is overwhelming. Just when you say, "I can't handle any more," that is not love. True love bears all things. The NIV says, "Love always protects."

**M. Never loses faith.** This means that true love never ceases to have faith.

**N. Is always hopeful.** True love never loses hope, even in its darkest hour. Genuine love never loses faith and is always hopeful, this is why it can endure. Wow. Only God, who is love, can define what love is truly like.

**O. Endures through every circumstance.** The NIV says, "always perseveres." ESV says, "endures all things. What does this mean? Fee says it best, "Love has a tenacity in the present, buoyed by its absolute confidence in the future, that enables it to live in every kind of circumstance and continually to pour itself out in behalf of others." We can't

learn to love and live this way until you list it out and then make a commitment—moms, dads, sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters—that we’re determined to live out God’s love like this. Guess what—you can’t do this without the power of the Holy Spirit, but it won’t happen in your life to any degree of effectiveness if you don’t stretch, sacrifice and strive to live this way. It will change everyone’s lives that you touch.

### **III. Lead your life based on your priorities and practices based on God’s love**

#### **A. Fill up with God’s love before you pour out (*picture on slide*)**

There are several ways we can fill up on God’s love. A daily devotional or personal time with Jesus. This can involve reading your Bible daily. Take time to be still in His presence and listen to Him and then pray. Also, I cannot emphasize enough how important it is that you worship throughout your day. One of the best ways I can do this is I listen to worship music that takes me into the presence of Jesus. One of my favorite ways to study is to have on my favorite music. One of my favorite worship videos is **Paradoxology, by Elevation Church**. I studied and listened to “MIGHTY GOD” for a good 2-4 hours. I found myself in God’s presence and was carried along by the Lord’s presence and power as I wrote out my script. It was heavenly. It just filled up my cup. Please hear me, loved ones. You cannot love this way by simply trying harder. This is the Love of Jesus Christ. It takes the power of His Holy Spirit. Paul calls the Holy

Spirit the “The Spirit of Jesus.” You must spend time in His presence, so you can be transformed, so you can begin to live your life in this way. This is the lifestyle of love, and it does not come naturally to any of us. Naturally we’re selfish, arrogant, insecure, fearful, and you can go on and on. Ephesians 3:18 says, **“And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is.”**

**B. Focus on a person’s face over a screen and a person’s voice over a text (*picture on slide*)**

I will be very honest here. It breaks my heart to see how many of us will have our spouses in our presence, our children—and our phones, ipads and computers take front and center. I believe this grieves the Holy Spirit. We must make our spouses and our kids’ top priority over our electronic devices. I like watching news and certain shows. But I will tell you, when Kathe or my daughter walk into the room, I pause the show and acknowledge them, and if they want to talk, they get top priority. You can ask Kathe. She has no problem—no matter what I am watching, when she calls my name, or she walks into the room, I pause whatever it is. It sends the message that your spouse, child or friend is not as important than whatever it is your watching. Don’t sit at the dinner table or when you go out for a meal and you sit there and ignore each other and play with your phone. This is sheer insanity. I have to tell our staff when we’re at staff meeting to put your electronics away. **“Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold**

**tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other.”**

Romans 12:9-10

### **C. Favor presence over productivity (*picture on slide*)**

I would like you to write this number down: 27,375. That's the number of days that they say is the average lifespan of a human being. 27,375 give or take a few years maybe for some of us. What does that mean exactly? It means, if you are age 25, you have about 18,250 days left. If you are age 50, you have approximately 9,125 days left. If you're age 65, my age June 29<sup>th</sup>, I have, they say, about 3,650 days, which would be 10 years left. I plan on living beyond that, but here is my point. Psalm 90:12 says, **“Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom.”** Loved ones, I want to close today by saying to you that you want to invest more of your presence in your spouse if your married; with your kids, if you have them, regardless of whether they live in your home or not. Too many families have been destroyed because of lack of presence of the husband for the wife, wife for the husband, lack of time spent by the father with his children and lack of the mother's time with her children. Part of the problem is you might be in the presence of your family, but are you there? How much true intimacy, life and love is shared? I want to encourage you, especially those who border on being workaholics, to spend more quality time with your family, your church family, your small group, and the ministry teams that you serve with. Let's pray.