

SESSION 20: MOTHERS AND SONS

Avoiding the “Mother Wound”

I. What Is It?

Two Expressions:

- Sons become overly passive (feminized) in regard to women. (1 Kings 21)
- Sons become overly dominant (hostile) in regard to women. (Genesis 3)

Definition:

The “Mother Wound” is an unhealthy emotional relationship with mom that causes the son to either be threatened by the influence of women later on in life or to over identify and become submissive to the influence of women.

Characteristics:

- Not blatant but subtle.
- Not a wound of abuse, neglect, or absenteeism but a wound that looks like love and care.
- Not from inattention but over attention.
- Looks like love but feels like control.
- Has a power that can shape and/or warp the masculine psyche.

II. Why Does It Happen?

Begins with: an absent or distant father or an absence of men in general.

Perpetuated by:

- Ignorant moms.
- Needy, hurting moms.
- Unwilling to release moms.
- Fill in the Gaps moms.

III. How Do We Help Sons Make the Break?

Tips to Mothering toward Manhood:

1. Be aware of your feminine blind spots and listen to masculine input.
2. Be a woman and expect your son to treat you like one.
3. Expect him to do the right thing, even if it is scary or hard.
4. Expect him to be responsible and let him shoulder his responsibilities.
5. Encourage “man time” between him and his dad or male mentor(s).
6. Commit now to treat his wife with respect.

An Example: Jesus and Mary

Discussion Questions:

1. From our Reflection Assignment last week, how did you process your sexuality last week with God? How does His offer of forgiveness, redemption, and empowerment help you in this process?
2. Have you observed any examples of a “feminized male”? How do you see this trend affecting the family and community?
3. How can a wife encourage her husband to pass along his masculine identity to his son(s)?
4. Which of the “Tips to Mothering” resonated with you and why?
5. When you look at the development of the relationship between Jesus and Mary, what adjustments did Mary have to make to allow Jesus the freedom to fulfill his masculine destiny? What can we learn from Mary’s example in handling the separation process emotionally and practically?

Reflection Assignment:

If you are not a mother, what have you learned about the men in your life, and the importance of their mothers?

If you are the mother of daughters, what do you need to teach them from this lesson?

If you are the mother of a son, what can you begin doing now to help your son become the man God intends him to be? What challenges will you face?

Passage to Ponder this week: Ephesians 5:31

Week Twenty Summary:

A few weeks ago, we developed this Biblical Definition of a Woman:

A Real Woman...

- *Rejects Deception*
- *Empowers Others*
- *Shapes Future Generations*
- *Looks to the Greater Reward...God's Reward*

This definition carries a number of challenges for those of us who are mothers, especially mothers of sons. For one thing, we tend to measure our worth (or significance) based on “how our kids are doing.” We face tremendous pressure to *make sure* our kids do well. We have the idea that this is what it means to “Shape Future Generations.” Surely, if we love, nourish, and care for our kids well enough, we can make sure they will turn out well. On the other hand, we’re hearing about the dangers of using our nurturing capacity to control others. For example, if we take care of our boys “too well,” do we teach them to be dependent *on us*? And, “Empowering Others” means we want our sons to be courageous leaders, who reject passivity and accept responsibility. Does a mother’s desire and tendency to nurture interfere with her son becoming a Biblical Man? The answer is that it *can*. In our Biblical Manhood class, this issue is called being “overly bonded to Mother.” The danger is even greater in families where the father is absent either physically, or emotionally. Boys who are raised mainly under the supervision of women without positive male influences can develop two different negative patterns of behavior: They may become overly passive in regard to women—dominated by their own emotions and those of the women around them. Or they may become domineering and hostile toward women—resisting strong women in their lives by “pushing back” and becoming defensive or angry.

A number of factors contribute to moms fostering the “overly bonded to Mother” atmosphere.

- Some of us, finding our identity in “being the mom”, have great difficulty letting go of our sons and encouraging their independence from us.
- Some of us, needy and hurting from a bad marriage or lack of a husband, unintentionally recruit our sons as surrogate husbands (not sexually, but emotionally).
- Some of us, sensing our son’s need for masculine influence, try to fill the gap. We attempt to act as both Dad and Mom, but find in the process we can’t do either well.
- None of us would deliberately trip up our sons on their path toward manhood. When we do so, ignorance is a factor.

But ignorance is easily corrected! Once we are aware of the danger, there are a number of choices we can make aimed at raising our sons into the next generation of leaders:

- Be aware of your feminine blind spots and listen to masculine input.
- Be a woman and expect your son to treat you like one.
- Expect him to do the right thing, even if it is scary or hard.
- Expect him to be responsible and let him shoulder his responsibilities.
- Encourage “man time” between him and his dad or male mentor(s).
- Commit now to treat his wife with respect.