

Women on Mission
1 Thessalonians 2:7-8
Rev. Brian Bill
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A week ago, I was out of town helping three of our grandsons move from Virginia to central Illinois. Their parents also came along with them, but my assignment was to hang out with Pip, Ez, and Sim. We gorged on frozen yogurt, played tag at a park, decapitated dandelions, ate a lot of candy, hiked at Starved Rock, and rode bikes and scooters through mud puddles. Everything went well until their mom came outside to see them soaked with water and covered with mud. The grandsons froze when Law and Order arrived. Once they recovered, they quickly threw me under the bus by saying, "*Pa let us do it. He said it was OK.*" Lydia looked at me, shook her head, and then broke into a smile.

It's an amazing thing for me to see all four of our daughters as mothers. They are as incredible as their mother, who impacted and equipped them to be women on mission as they now train and equip their children like they were trained and equipped. God has entrusted Beth and I with 11 grandchildren (one is still in the womb, and one is in heaven). It's our joy to partner with their parents in evangelizing and discipling these young image bearers to become gospel proclaimers for the glory of God.

I recognize some of you aren't looking forward to a syrupy Mother's Day sermon because your mother is no longer here. Or maybe you have a rough relationship with your mom, and you struggle with all the saccharine sentiments in Hallmark cards. Some of you may have a mother who is very sick, and you wonder how much longer she's going to be with you. Maybe you're a single dad and you hurt for your kids as you watch them struggle.

Some time ago, I read a helpful article called, "Don't Make Moms Stand in Church This Sunday." We won't do that because there are...

- Women who struggle with infertility.
- Singles who desire to be married and have children.
- Parents who've experienced miscarriage, stillbirth, or the death of a child.
- Women who are OK with not being a mom.
- Stepmoms helping to raise children who don't value them.

- Foster parents who've chosen to refrain from being called "mom" and "dad" for the emotional health of a child in their care.
- Parents who've placed a child for adoption or are waiting for an adoption to go through.
- Mothers who've had an abortion (and fathers who encouraged them to do so).
- Women with wayward, distant, or estranged grown children.

There are probably some mothers here who wish they didn't have kids, and I know of women who would give anything just to have a child. Many moms I know are gripped by guilt and are swimming in shame because they think they're not doing a good enough job. A number of moms are flying solo as they work hard to nurture their child's faith without the support of their father. Some of you are grandmothers who are standing in the gap as you strive to raise your grandchildren to become young disciples of Christ.

I appreciated one author's tender insight: *"The point is that there is not a one-size-fits-all journey of womanhood, and we hurt women in our churches by venerating one path over all others...let's come together and worship Jesus alone, not idealized images of our mothers or ourselves."*

Let me be quick to say if you aren't married or don't have children you are not inferior. Womanhood is not only about marriage and children. Your worth as a woman goes far beyond your marital or parental status.

As we begin, I do want to give a "shout-out" to those of you who are raising young children. Some of you are battling bedtimes and wondering when all the whining is going to stop (it will be a while). You're juggling schedules and running on emotional "empty." Many of you can relate to Proverbs 31:15 which says, ***"She rises while it is yet night..."***

Please take a deep breath and listen to these comforting words from the Good Shepherd found in Isaiah 40:11: ***"He will tend His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in His arms; He will carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young."*** May you know the sweet gentleness of the Shepherd as He leads you to love the little lambs in your care.

We're continuing in our series called "Mission Ready." Two weeks ago, we looked at a "Church on Mission" as we learned how the commissions of Christ form our mission statement as a church: *Living on mission by glorifying God and*

making disciples of Jesus among our neighbors and the nations. Last week, Pastor Chris celebrated “Students on Mission” and challenged us to see our pivotal roles as parents, grandparents and church members in the evangelizing and discipling of our children and grandchildren. If we want to have students that live on mission, our families, and our church must see our kids and students as part of OUR mission.

When you think about it, the closest neighbors to us are own children and grandchildren. In the weeks ahead, we’ll be looking at living on mission in our neighborhoods. To get a head start, stop by the Café and pick up a copy of *The Art of Neighboring*. Our topic today is “Women on Mission.” We’ll conclude this series on Father’s Day with a message called, “Men on Mission.”

After Paul and Silas planted a church in Philippi, they equipped the new believers to live on mission before they were sent as missionaries to Thessalonica. They only spent a few weeks there before persecution caused them to escape in the middle of the night. Later, he wrote two letters to this new church.

When thinking about how to communicate his care and concern for them, Paul employed the metaphor of a mother’s love for her children. With that as a brief background, please turn to 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8: ***“But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.”***

Here’s our main idea: *Women who live on mission make an eternal impact.* This passage gives us five ways women can make a difference in the lives of young disciples.

1. A gentle heart. In verse 6, we see that Paul could have appealed to his authority as an apostle: ***“...though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.”*** Instead, verse 7 shows us his heart: ***“But we were gentle among you...”*** The word ***“gentle”*** communicates tenderness and kindness. Literally, it means, *“we became gentle among you”* or *“we were made gentle among you,”* showing that gentleness was not Paul’s default setting.

Galatians 5:22-23 tells us that gentleness is evidence of the Spirit-filled life: ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”*** If you struggle being gentle with your kids, ask God for help. Psalm 18:35 says, ***“You***

have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great.”

I cringe whenever I hear a parent lambasting a child out in public. Years ago, I recall an exasperated mom at Walmart calling her child a brat and threatening to smack him. When I intervened, I thought she was going to take me out. It's so important to watch our words because Proverbs 18:21 says, ***“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.”*** Moms, your words will mold and shape your child for life. Proverbs 15:1 adds, ***“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”***

Paul used an illustration of gentleness in the second part of verse 7: ***“...like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.”*** The picture here is of a mom slowing down to provide nourishment for her baby. Whether a mother uses a bottle or through nursing, this tender time of bonding provides ***“care,”*** which means, ***“to warm or keep warm, to cherish with tender love, and to pay attention to.”***

BTW, being gentle in your parenting doesn't mean you don't discipline your child. Proverbs 29:17 says, ***“Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.”*** Discipline is a God-given responsibility and is a key part of disciplining your child. The New Living Translation of Proverbs 13:24 is helpful: ***“If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don't love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them.”***

Unfortunately, many parents today are practicing passive parenting. Many years ago, I read an article called, “Require Obedience of Your Children.” Here are a few insights.

- Requiring obedience of children is implicit in the biblical requirement that children obey their parents.
- The expectation of obedience should be practiced at home on inconsequential things so that it is possible in public on consequential things.
- It takes effort to require obedience, and it's worth it.
- Children whose parents require obedience are happier.
- Requiring obedience is not the same as requiring perfection.

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2. A gregarious heart. The first part of verse 8 says, ***“So, being affectionately desirous of you...”*** The idea is to *“long to be with someone.”* This sentiment is similar to what Paul expressed in Philippians 1:8: ***“For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.”*** I celebrate how so many moms at Edgewood love spending time with their children by being purposefully present with them.

Marny Kostenberger writes,

“...the ‘Lord builds the house’ through parents who embrace their God-given mission of parenting, exercise a powerful presence in their children’s lives, and adopt a long-term perspective...it is a mission that has the potential to outperform parents’ own experiences and, ultimately, outlast their lives...remember that you are not alone. You have a divine blueprint (God’s plan and purpose for your child), divine instruction (the Scriptures), divine empowerment (the Holy Spirit), and a divinely given support group (the church).”

As Pastor Chris taught last week, Deuteronomy 6:7 challenges parents and grandparents to stay connected with children and grandchildren through the ordinary routines of life. We are to make an impression upon our children by talking about God when we’re sitting at home, when we’re out and about, at bedtime and at breakfast. What was instinctive in Hebrew homes must become intentional in families today. We are to show our kids who God is, not just in formal spiritual settings, but also in the casual classroom of everyday life. Martin Lloyd-Jones said it like this, *“The goal is to make Christianity so attractive that children will desire it.”*

Speaking of everyday life, Liesl Parks is organizing some play dates at parks for parents and kids this summer. The schedule includes Friday and Saturday mornings to make it easier for families to attend. Pick up a card in the lobby after the service.

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3. A gospel heart. We see this in the next phrase in verse 8: ***“...we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God...”*** To be ***“ready”*** has the idea of expectant intentionality. The word ***“share”*** means, *“to impart.”* Moms have the unique opportunity to answer questions, to share Scripture, and to point children to the gospel.

I am so impressed with how many Edgewood women are students of the Word of God. After my message two weeks ago, two women reached out to let me know I should have been more precise in my wording.

- When I said, *“our job is not to be prosecutors or even defense attorneys – our work is simply to be witnesses who report what we have experienced and know to be true,”* one sister gently pointed out how we are called to speak out about sin and to give a defense for our faith. She’s right.
- Another woman of the Word pointed out that instead of using the phrase, *“a Christ-less eternity,”* I should have said people without Christ will end up in Hell. Good catch, sister.

Paul was laser-focused on the gospel in 1 Thessalonians 2.

- Verse 2: *“...we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.”*
- Verse 4: *“But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel...”*
- Verse 8: *“...we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God.”*
- Verse 9: *“...we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.”*

Let’s pull these verses together in one sentence: *Because we have been entrusted with the gospel, let’s work night and day so we’re ready to boldly proclaim the good news to the next generation.*

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 captures the essence of the gospel well: *“For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”*

The gospel requires people to turn from false idols to serve the living and true God. Idols can be carved images, or they can be the hidden idols of the heart: money, lust, success, sports, comfort, hobbies, possessions, families, or another person. Anything that takes God’s rightful position as first place in our lives is an idol. Our idolatry places us under condemnation, leading to the wrath to come because a

holy God must punish sin. We deserve punishment in an eternal Hell, which is a place of unquenchable fire with weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- **Recognize** you and your children are guilty of idolatry and in danger of the wrath to come. Parents, you don't need anyone to convince you that your children are depraved little sinners. Help them see their need for the Savior.
- **Realize** the good news of the gospel that Jesus came to deliver us by taking the wrath we deserve on Himself when He died in our place and rose again.
- **Repent** of your sins by turning from them.
- **Receive** Christ and serve Him until He returns, or you go to glory.

Moms and grandmas, I plead with you to be consumed with the gospel of God! While we want to provide our children and grandchildren with a good and comfortable life, if we do not focus on the gospel, our families will default to the idols of culture. Our children are depraved sinners in need of deliverance and salvation. They are also treasured by Jesus, who invites them to a saving relationship with Him in Matthew 19:14: ***“Let the little children come to me.”*** Are you pushing your children toward anything that may lead them away from cherishing Jesus as their supreme treasure? Are you doing all you can to provide an environment where they will be drawn to the Savior for salvation?

According to a 50-year study of Christian and non-Christian families, most young adults who follow Christ either come from non-Christian homes or from homes where they grew up in love with Jesus because mom and dad were in love with Jesus. Their parent's passion for Christ permeated their lives and passed through their pores to their kids. Sadly, very few believers came from homes where the parents were indifferent and apathetic toward Christ. This study suggests the chances are better for a child growing up in a non-Christian home to become a sold-out believer than for a child growing up in a spiritually lukewarm environment.

Gospel-centered parenting is not about producing perfect kids or measuring success by behavior alone—it's about pointing children to Jesus in every stage of life. It means recognizing that both parents and children are sinners in need of grace. Rather than relying solely on rules, rewards, behavior modification, or fear of punishment, gospel-centered parenting emphasizes love, forgiveness, and the transforming power of Christ. Parents model humility by admitting their own failures, seeking forgiveness, and showing their children what it looks like to live in daily dependence on God. The ultimate goal isn't just moral behavior, but a heart that trusts and treasures Jesus and tells others about Him.

I heard about a pastor who had a long conversation with a man about being saved. When he was done the young man said he was ready. The pastor was pleased with himself, so he asked, “*What did I say that convinced you to follow Christ?*” The man answered, “*It was nothing I heard you say. It was the way my mother lived.*”

A mother can touch an entire generation just by loving her own children well. Actually, she can impact the next 100 years. Gloria Furman writes:

“Our work as moms is to glorify God who sent His Son to do His mighty work on the cross in our place to pay the price for our sins. Humbly receiving God’s grace and inviting our children to share our joyful gratitude for what Jesus has done...is our happy mission in this fallen world...it is only by the grace of God that moms can nurture the souls of our littlest neighbors...the aim of motherhood is to declare the good news to the next generation...making disciples is the aim of missional motherhood.”

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Women on mission are gentle, gregarious, and focused on the gospel. They’re also givers.

4. A giving heart. We see this in the next phrase of verse 8: “***...but also our own selves.***” The word for “***selves***” can be translated as “***souls.***” Women on mission give themselves to others for the sake of the gospel. Paul said something similar in 2 Corinthians 12:15: “***I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls...***” Moms, we know you are laying yourself out for your families, and even though we can’t see everything, God sees all the sacrifices you are making. As 1 John 3:16 says, you’re doing so out of love for your Lord: “***By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.***”

A young woman found her mother’s Bible on the kitchen table after her passing. The cover was torn, pages were frayed, and verses were underlined with tear-stained ink. Tucked inside was a note in her mother’s handwriting: “*I may not have had much to give you in this world, but I gave you my prayers, my example, and my God.*”

As she flipped through the Bible, she saw her name, and her brother’s name next to verses of promise and protection. This was a mother who had *given of herself by giving her family to God* every day.

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5. A glad heart. The last phrase in verse 8 shows how women on mission live lives of joy: “...*because you had become very dear to us.*” The phrase, “*very dear*” means, “*dearly beloved.*” This makes me think of Philippians 4:1: “*Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.*”

Action Steps

1. Pray every day that God would equip you to be gentle, gregarious, gospel-focused, giving, and glad as you live on mission for His glory and the good of your family.
2. Read the Bible every day with your kids. Pastor Chris recommends a one-month family devotional called, “Fusion Family.” You can purchase a copy at the Café resource center.
3. Determine to partner with Edgewood by bringing your children to church every weekend, enrolling them in VBS July 17-19, Awana, and youth group on Thursday nights.
4. Consider serving in EdgeKids or our EdgeStudent ministry. We have needs in VBS, and in Awana when it begins in September.
5. Get involved in our Intentional Discipleship ministry.
6. Consider serving with Safe Families.
7. Fill up a baby bottle with change for Pregnancy Resources and help your child or grandchild learn how this supports babies.

When I was with three of our grandsons a week ago, we sat down for a meal in their new home. I decided to tell our oldest grandson that I recently preached on the Great Commission. When I began summarizing Matthew 28:18-20, Pip, who is 8, quoted the passage from memory. I explained how the word “*nations*” refers to people groups and how there are 17,000 of them in the world. When I told him 7,000 of them are still unreached by the gospel, his eyes got big. I mentioned that’s why we send out missionaries. I also explained that their family moved from Virginia to Streator in obedience to the Great Commission as his daddy is now a pastor and the whole family is charged with making disciples in a new location.

I teared up when I realized that my grandson has been taught the gospel by his parents and by his church. It was my joy to simply reinforce it at their dinner table. BTW, their previous church uses the Gospel Project, which emphasizes how every part of the Bible points to Jesus Christ. Edgewood uses this same curriculum in

our children's ministry, and in one of our adult classes. A couple days ago, another grandchild, who is only three, quoted the names of all 39 books of the Old Testament. She learned this song from her brother and her parents!

As Pastor Chris reminded us, when parents, grandparents, and the local church work together, young disciples of Jesus are formed.

Press on, sisters in Christ because women who live on mission make an eternal impact.

Interview with Sheila Kuriscak

1. Can you share the mission of our EdgeWomen's Ministry?
2. How do you see God moving among the women of Edgewood right now?
3. I know you've been emphasizing mentoring and Intentional Discipleship. Why is this so important?
4. What are some ways women can get involved?
5. What are some initiatives you'd like to see in the future?

Closing Prayer – Grant Williams