

1

A Plate of Hot Toast

I would like to pay tribute to my own mother. Almost certainly, the words *child psychology* were not part of her well-rounded vocabulary. Nevertheless, her very special thoughtfulnesses engraved on my childhood, etchings which are as clear today as when I skipped home from school in those long ago days in my native Scotland.

A fire glowed in the big kitchen fireplace; and on a swinging hob, a plate of hot, buttery toast greeted me as I tossed my schoolbooks down.

Just bread toasted to a golden brown? No, much more than that. A mother who was home and watched for her children as one by one we rounded the corner to our street; a mother to whom we could pour out immediately, while they were fresh in our minds, the events of our usually uneventful day. And she listened.

My mother had time to teach us to sing. She sang with us until we knew all the beautiful old ballads of our country. She sang the old hymns so that, although

I did not know the Saviour until years later, I had this golden store she had given me. It's with me still.

Contrast the poor children in many a home today. Poor, though they may possess every up-to-the-minute gadget of electronics and cosmetics. Poor, because their mother is not home.

Consider the child who dawdles her way home. Why hurry? One second grader seated on the curb near her home, petting a stray kitten, voiced it all when she explained to a concerned teenage neighbor, "Nobody's home at my house and the kitty loves me."

If this little article seems to come through to you as a plea to be "a mommy who's home," you read it right.

There will be time for many things as you move on from being the mother of little children, but there will never again be time to do things for and with these little children. One of the most telling statements I have heard lately came from the lips of Dr. Clyde Narramore: "Sadly, the film of childhood cannot be rewound for a second run."

The kind of memories that warm my heart now, and which I suppose I took for granted at the time, cost my mother plenty. Good memories do cost—in time, in unselfishness, in understanding. But they last when all the things we can give a child are discarded, perhaps relegated to the garbage.

Think of your delight in later years when your son or daughter recalls, "Mom, it was just great coming home from school. *You* were there." One grown-up daughter

reminded her mother, "I loved to look through the front window and see you ironing."

Ironing or warm toast, they spell the same: "Mom's home."

2

The Now People

Have you listened to a group of mothers as they voiced their dreams of tomorrow? Did the rosy future sometimes come through like this?

“When the twins are off my hands—”

“I can hardly wait until Billy goes to kindergarten—”

“Think of all the time I’ll have when the kids are in school and out of my way!”

A sensitive child can be hurt by hearing such talk, however lightly the words are spoken. Cindy, playing with the neighbor children and within earshot of the mothers, overheard the remark, “When Cindy’s out of my way all day—”

Half an hour later, when the mothers gathered their broods before going home to prepare dinner, Cindy could not be found.

“She was playing with us,” a playmate assured Cindy’s mother.

A search of the play area proved futile, and the frantic mother began to be haunted by dread fears for her

little girl. Fortunately, Cindy's little feet had not carried her far, and within the hour her mother was eagerly gathering her into her arms.

"Why did you leave the other children? Where were you going?"

"Mamma," the child whimpered, "I heard you talking, and I thought you wanted me to go away."

We can all imagine ourselves in this mother's place at that moment. To be sure, it's an extreme case. But it happened. A child put her own construction on what had been said by her mother—a mother who was dreaming aloud about a faraway tomorrow.

This example may make us appreciate today. While we should make provision for the tomorrow that possibly will bring some leisure time and less regimentation of our schedule, we should never be caught moaning that our home, our children, or our husband is cramping our style.

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil [and the good] thereof" (Mt 6:34).

The now people enjoy God's gifts while it is today. And their children are aware of this.

3

“Hopeth All Things”

Do we really expect the best of our kids in school work, cooperation in the home, sports achievements, and life attitudes?

Mary Glenn was stopped short one afternoon as she passed the room of her teenage son Carl. She heard, “I might as well do it. I’ll get blamed anyway. You know Mom.”

She couldn’t find out what was being discussed by her two boys without revealing that she had heard part of the conversation. But the awful truth shook her considerably. Could Carl possibly be right? Was she indeed guilty of this kind of suspicious attitude? She was reminded, in the midst of her disturbing thoughts, of something she had once read: “Suspicion creates that which it suspects.”

From that day on, this mother was more careful. No more sharp-tongued “You’re late—as usual,” or “I suppose you left your room in a mess,” or “Listening to records, and your homework isn’t even half done!”

A new “hopeth all things” spirit replaced the negative prejudging, and the change was reflected in both sons in this home. A new frankness sprang up between the boys and their parents as their mother made them aware of her trust and expectation.

Can we doubt this is one of the factors of love? Love “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” (1 Co 13:7). Hopeth *all things*—even that a son or a daughter will do the right thing.

Children have a strong sense of fairness. Ask the average teenager, for example, “What do you think contributes most to the gap between you and your parents?” Many will answer, “They don’t trust me. They nearly always expect the worst of me.” Often, with an angry shrug, a teenager will echo Carl’s words, “I might as well do it. I’ll get blamed anyway.”

How would you react to such treatment? I know how I would.

By contrast, there’s a special quality about the child who knows that he is trusted. It tends to bring out the best in anyone when he has the assurance that people expect the best of him.

Our children know that we pray for them, but how much more our prayers mean when we exercise this “hopeth all things” faith in them. Fortunate is the child who, although his best doesn’t quite come up to his mother’s expectations, can rest assured that he will not be greeted with “Just a *B*? I knew you would never make the honor roll.”

Such a mother must surely need a fresh touch from the One who, because He is incarnate love, “hopeth all things” for us.

4

Can We Afford Moods?

Mothers can't afford bad moods.

"Why not?" you may be asking. "Other people have bad moods."

Granted we all get up on the wrong side of the bed some mornings. So this is one of those days. Dad has been alerted before he arrives at the breakfast table. He monitors his words to keep peace.

Not so teenage Jack. Sensing the tension, he blurts out, "So Mom's in one of her moods!" Then, with the memory of other such occasions in his mind, he cautions his sister with a whispered, "Watch it, sis."

Breakfast is a fizzle, even though, with the contrariness with which we women seem to have been born, Mother has taken pains to prepare a particularly fine breakfast. One by one the members of the family go on their way for the day.

Alone, Mother begins to face reality. "Me and my moods," she says to herself with some disgust; and she begins to do some evaluating. "They've cost me the

loss of a happy, relaxed family starting the day together, eager chatter at the table, and loving good-bys. I'm beginning to think I can't afford these moods."

She's right, as I'm sure we all agree. Bad moods are definitely a luxury forbidden to the Christian. But how can we dispel them?

Since confession is good for the soul, let me share an experience of one such day in my life. Brought to the realization that I was in a particularly bad mood and increasingly convicted by the Holy Spirit, I dropped to my knees just where I was in my living room and asked the Lord to change my mood. It was a brief prayer; and as I rose from my knees, my eyes saw the lovely wood-grained wall motto with the heading "As a Man Thinketh." I read the scripture below it: "Whatsoever things are true, . . . honest, . . . just, . . . pure, . . . lovely; . . . think on these things" (Phil 4:8).

Think on these things. Since our moods are directly related to and regulated by our thoughts, following this scriptural advice is like waving a magic wand over a bad mood.

Can we afford moods? Yes, we can. We can afford *good* moods.