

# Rise Up And Build

---

*"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18*

---

May 9, 2021

## **Motherhood**

On this day, May 9, 2021 millions of Americans will celebrate what has come to be known as "Mother's day." This practice dates back to May 9, 1914 when "President Woodrow Wilson signed a joint resolution of Congress recommending that Congress and the executive departments of the government observe Mother's Day" (**World Book Encyclopedia**), vol.13).

You will note, however, that this article bears the title "**Motherhood**" — it is not entitled "Mother's Day." Yes, I strongly believe real "mothers" should be honored. In fact, one of the ten commands was worded thusly: "*Honor your father and your **mother**, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you*" (Ex. 20:12). In the New Testament, Paul wrote, saying, "*Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise*" (Eph. 6:1-2). The same apostle wrote to Timothy, saying, "*Honor widows that are widows indeed,*" and one of the qualifications for a widow "*indeed*" is that she shall have "*brought up children*" (I Tim. 5:3,10). Among other things "*widows indeed*" are **mothers**, and they should be honored

However, I have mixed emotions about setting aside a particular **Sunday** and calling it "Mother's Day." On the one hand, today (May 9, 2021) is really "*the Lord's day*" (Rev. 1:10), as is every first day of the week. As near and dear as good mothers are, biblically speaking, this is still "*the Lord's day*." When we turn "*the Lord's day*" into another "*day*," we could inadvertently neglect to give the Lord the reverence and devotion He both deserves and demands. And on the other hand, the practice of giving due honor to mothers should be an **every day** occurrence, and not something done just one day a year. I have no objection to children honoring their mothers on this day, but I do object to making such "*honor*" an annual event instead of a daily occurrence. Mindful, however, that mothers are generally remembered on this day and that such practice is on the minds of millions, I am taking the liberty of writing on "**Motherhood**" — not just "Mother's Day." **Motherhood** was designed by God. "Mother's day" was designed by man.

"*Mother*" is a Bible word. It was first used in Gen. 3:20 which says that "*Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the **mother** of all living.*" In fact, the word "*mother*" is said to occur 226 times in the Bible. Deborah described herself as "*a mother in Israel*" (Judges 5:7),

an expression reflecting great honor. Yes, as each of us surly recognizes, there is something magic in that word “*mother*” — which stirs up the tenderest affections in the human heart.

Biblically speaking, in terms of origin, **wifehood** must precede **motherhood**. Eve was first a “*wife*” and then a mother (Gen. 4:1) In the order set forth in I Tim. 5:14 getting **married** comes before **bearing** children. The marriage “*bed*” is “*undefiled*,” but any other such cohabitation involves fornication and adultery (Heb. 13:4).

However, the essence of motherhood is in **nurturing** children, not simply **having** children. Women, by nature, are endowed with qualifications which fit them for the role of “*mother*,” and for nurturing. Generally speaking, a mother’s love is more tender and kind; emotionally, she is nearer the child’s world, and her maternal instincts make her more suited for nurturing children. By design, nature, and divine intent, a “*mother*” (whether natural or adoptive) is vastly better equipped to bring “*up children*” (I Tim. 5:16) than any government agency, day care center, or any community or church-funded baby sitting service. It doesn’t take “a village” to raise children; it takes **parents** — including both mothers and fathers!

With regards to the perspective of this article, without fear of successful contradiction, we affirm that it is impossible to over emphasize the strength of a mother’s influence — whether for good or evil.

**The good influence** of a mother can be seen in the example of Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Grieving because she was barren, Hannah prayed to the Lord for “*a man child*,” and she vowed that she would lend him to the Lord as long as he lived — if only the Lord would answer her petitions and give her a child (I Sam. 1:5,10,11,28). In due season the Lord answered her prayers; Samuel was born, and Hannah honored her vow. Samuel became a great tower of influence, serving God as a judge (I Sam. 7:15), prophet (Acts 3:24), and priest, as is indicated by his offering sacrifices (I Sam.10:17,25). Then, too, we think about the mother of Moses who, defying Pharaoh, hid her child for three months, and in the wonderful providence of God was hired to “*nurse the child*” after Pharaoh’s daughter took the child as “*her own*” when she found the ark in which he was lovingly placed for his protection (Ex. 2:7-10). Even though Moses, by the Egyptians, was regarded as “*the son of Pharaoh’s daughter*” (Heb. 11:34), you can be sure that it was his actual mother (Jochebed, Ex. 6:20) who helped instill faith in the heart of Moses. And what a great man Moses turned out to be! Through Moses’ leadership God delivered Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 12:31-51). Through Moses, God gave the law to Israel (Ex. 20); Deut. 5), and Moses even served as a type of Christ (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:20-22). Moses was the only person to have God as his Undertaker (Deut. 34:6), and some 15 centuries after his death, he, with Elijah, appeared “*talking with*” Jesus when Jesus “*was transfigured before*” Peter, James, and John (Matt. 17:1,2). Moses was truly a great Bible hero, but were it not for a courageous woman named Jochebed there would not have been a faithful lawgiver named Moses. And time and space fail me to tell of Ruth, the grandmother of David, of Lois and Eunice the grandmother and mother of Timothy, and countless other great mothers who (for the better) changed the course of human history. No wonder W. S.Ross said “the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world!” No wonder Napoleon said “the future destiny of the child is always the work of a mother.”

Conversely, the **evil influence** of a bad mother can not be over stated. For example, Ahaziah was Israel’s eighth king; he reigned two years over Israel, and “*did evil in the sight of the Lord*.” He “*served Baal and worshipped him, and provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger...*” (I Kings 22:51-53). But let us not forget that he was the son of Ahab who was married to Jezebel, whose name has become so synonymous with evil that no righteous mother would even consider naming her daughter “*Jezebel*.” Then, too, we call to mind Herodias who influenced her

daughter (who had danced before Herod) to ask Herod to behead John the Baptist and bring his head to her “*on a platter*” (Mark 6:21-25). Many examples could be cited, both good and bad, and which serve to buttress the conclusion reached by an unknown writer, namely this: “A **bad** woman can take herself and 1,000 men (who were **good**) to hell, and a **good** woman can take herself and 1,000 men (who her **bad**) to heaven.” The point is clear — there is simply no way to overstate the influence (for good or bad) of mothers!

We need mothers today — mothers who regard children as precious gifts from God (Ps. 127:3), not unwanted accidents of nature. We need mothers whose “career” is in nurturing and loving their children, women who strive to be “*discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands*” (Titus 2:4,5), women who recognize the great honor God attaches to **motherhood**, and who willingly submit their wills to His will. Indeed America’s greatest crisis is not a shortage of energy; it is a shortage of mothers (and all that the term “mother” implies).

### **Conclusion**

We also need husbands who will recognize that the value of a mother’s influence in the home is greater than all the “second incomes” in the world. And we need children who will “*honor*” their mothers, and all that the word “*honor*” implies. Too many ingrate children take undue advantage of a mother’s love, continuing to lean on mother long after they reach adulthood, and long after time, hardship, age, and overwork has sapped her energies.

Dear reader, if you have a good mother, consider yourself fortunate. Multitudes are not so lucky. If you have a wife who is a good mother, consider yourself fortunate. Multitudes are not so lucky. Let us look up to mothers who really are **mothers**, the kind of mothers who meet God’s approval, and are role models for others to follow. Indeed, let us restore the dignity of true motherhood; let us uphold the sanctity of the home, and let us give honor to those precious women who made possible our very **existence!** Do it daily; not just one day a year!

\*\*\*\* —B. Witherington