

Heartcry for the Keeper of the Spring

One day as I was nursing one of my babies, one of my older children asked me, “Mother, do you love the baby more than me? You feed him from your body. You don’t feed me that way.” I replied tenderly, “I nursed you the same way, your first year of life, but now I feed you from my heart.” As a young mother, the Lord gave me the words in that moment, but I did not realize their full import. Older now, and I hope wiser, they are more true than ever. I am beginning to see that revelation from the Lord was one of the most significant ones *I have ever had as a mother.*

And, its significance grows with each passing day in this season of my life. I thought I was busy when I had four children under two (a toddler and a set of triplets), but I am finding that this season of parenting young men and women is by far the busiest and most intense. The pressure is immense and is revealing what exactly is in my heart more than any other season of my life so far.

Mr. Denny Kenaston, author of the outstanding parenting book titled *The Godly Seed*, reminded a group of ladies that the spiritual ground we gain is the legacy we leave our children. This vision gripped me and has never left me. All this ground, dear sisters, is in the heart.

When I was expecting our sixth child, a well-meaning family member devastated my joy by asking, “Will you have to neglect your two-year-old when this new baby is born? How can you care for the needs of all these children?” Before I answered, I remembered that I never felt adequate to care for the needs of our *first* son, either, when he was the only baby in our family! God gave me grace to reply that studying the family lives of men and women of history, as well as studying and observing many

mothers of large families, had shown me that the single most important thing in my child’s life was not necessarily what I could *do* for him but what I *was* to him.

I now understand that what I *am* is by far the most important issue in my life, much more than other, peripheral issues such as homeschooling (!), caring for the home, or other things that take up so much of our mental energy. Mr. Doug Phillips often reminds us in his writings and messages of the eternal sacredness and seriousness of what we do as parents—that “it is not a vain thing—it is our life.” To this I sound a hearty *Amen.*

I have been privileged to meet thousands of women, many of whom have become close friends and willing to share their hearts and inner struggles. We are crying out to Him day and night for the strength to allow Him to reign supreme in our “idol factories,” otherwise known as our hearts. We have seen that unless He rules unrivalled, our attempts at parenting will become dust and ashes. O that our hearts may be all of him.

In ministering to homeschooling mothers over the years, I have seen a definite shift in the emphasis of my talks, with the themes moving closer to heart issues and all that could be called Gifts of the Heart (an encouraging word, an approving nod, a word in season, an example to follow . . .). These talks are not developed in a vacuum. They are birthed out of my own struggles in concert with the heartaches and needs shared with me by the women I meet. And I am not the only one echoing the need for examining homeschooling “from the heart;” many others are also issuing the clarion call. It seems to be a theme whose time has come.

I have many times given a talk titled “The Schoolroom of a Mother’s Heart,” which was inspired by a tote bag with the compelling slogan: “The Mother’s Heart is the Child’s Schoolroom.” I thought then that the most significant portion of that schoolroom was the well of inspiration. I still do. But now more than ever I see the significance of allowing the Lord to be the “keeper of the spring” that feeds this well.

The late Dr. Peter Marshall, chaplain to the Senate, masterful preacher, and Scottish immigrant, told the story of a particular spring atop a mountain that birthed a stream that flowed down to a village in the valley. For many years, the town employed someone to tend the spring and keep it clean. However, one day the town decided the money could be better spent elsewhere—that keeping a caretaker on the mountain year-round was an unnecessary luxury. So they fired the caretaker, and the spring was left to its own devices. In a short time, the stream became polluted, sending contaminants flowing down the into the town. The source was not being cleaned—and far-reaching were the results.

The more I grow and learn, the more I understand that this is the *original* theme—for from our Heavenly Father’s heart come all things. The more I understand sin, the human heart, and the war for our hearts, the more I understand what God means when he commands me in Proverbs 4:23 to “guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” The needs of my own life, my passion for mothers and their children, together with a hatred of an image-management kind of spirituality, compel me to think long and hard about sins and issues that we all face but do not wish to discuss.

Sometimes when we know we are not guilty of the more obvious sins such as lying, stealing, etc., it is tempting to

overlook sins such as pride, anger, bitterness, laziness, envy, etc. But time is short! We cannot afford to ignore these issues, because we will cause *daily* stumbling blocks for our families if our heart springs are not clean. When we homeschool with dirty heart springs, our children may learn faster but that learning will include lessons of the heart we do not mean to teach! What is in the well will come up in the bucket! The pressures of homeschooling do not create those heart issues—they just reveal them.

Let us constantly ask the Lord to keep our springs clean. Let us wash ourselves with the water of His word. Let us diligently guard our hearts and homes from things that defile the *heart*, not just things that defile the body. Let us seek His face and not be turned aside. Let us seek Him, and He will wash us whiter than snow.

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