

We Are Called to Nurture

The Bible tells us that God knew what He was doing when He made our physical bodies. "You formed my inward parts," the psalmist says, and "I am fearfully and wonderfully frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in eyes saw my substance" (Ps. 139:13-16, NKJV). It is no accident, then, that women are equipped with certain body parts men don't have: wombs and breasts.

Why did God give women wombs? Why did He put breasts on them? The most obvious reason, of course, is to make it possible for them to bring forth and sustain physical life. In His perfect plan, God provided a means for mankind to "be fruitful and multiply" as He commanded (see Gen. 1:28; 9:1; 35:11).

But God wants us to produce spiritual as well as physical fruit while we are on earth. "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit," Jesus said (John 15:8).

And just as He provided the proper accoutrements for women to give birth to and nurture natural children, He made a way for us to foster spiritual children as well. Our unique physical make-up is a type and symbol of our spiritual roles.

Feed the Babies

One day I walked into the nursery in a hospital in Augusta, Georgia. I noticed a little baby who was crying very hard; but no matter how much he screamed, no one came to see what was the matter with him. I could tell he was beginning to choke on his own mucus.

There was a mother nearby attending to her baby, and I asked her where the crying child's mother was. "Oh, he doesn't have a mother," she said. "Someone left him on a doorstep, and he was found and brought here."

Realizing there was no one else to help him, I went over to the distressed baby and began to clear out his nose with a syringe. Suddenly I was filled with God's love and compassion for the child. Hot tears streamed down my face while I cared for him.

I don't know what ultimately happened to the little guy. But God used this experience to reveal to me the plight of the body of Christ.

He showed me that it is filled with thousands and thousands of such babies who have grown into adulthood without the benefit of mothering. They are rejected, hurt and angry. They feel they have no one they can talk to. And unless someone reaches out to help, they will continue to suffer and perhaps fall away altogether.

I believe God is calling women today to nurture these wounded children. He is asking us to feed them the milk of the Word from the fullness of our own spiritual "breasts" and to love them with His love.

I wish someone had done this for me. As a child, a young girl, a pastor's wife and a mother, I often struggled because I had no mentor, no one to show me the way. I experienced a lot of pain, walking out in my own life many of the difficult things women go through—until God touched me. It was my relationship with Him—El Shaddai, the Many-Breasted One—that helped me to survive.

I learned to depend on Him, to nurse at His breasts, to hide myself in His bosom—the place of intimacy Jesus retains (see John 1:18). But I might have grown to maturity and become fruitful sooner if there had been a godly woman—a spiritual mother—in my life to teach me how to get closer to Him.

That's what God's asking you to be—a "mother" who will reach out to young women and help the ones He sends into your life—by "feeding" them, loving them and helping them to

mature. He will give you opportunities to minister out of your own experiences—your trials and your triumphs—and there will be a release of the “milk” as you nurture them. The more you give out, the more God will fill you up again, and your “breasts” will become even larger and more capable of sustaining life.

First the Natural, Then the Spiritual

Every woman who has ever cared for a baby knows that when you have an infant, you have to do everything for him. You feed him, burp him, bathe him, dress him, change his diapers, watch over him, play with him, teach him, nurture him, love him. If you don't, he will not develop properly.

As the child grows, you teach him to become less and less dependent, until one day you release him to care entirely for himself, and you pray he is strong enough to survive and become all God intended him to be—including a godly parent himself.

It is the same with God and us. When we are first born into His family, He cleanses us by the blood of His Son, clothes us with His righteousness, nourishes us with the milk of the Word, teaches us His ways, and cares for us in the same tender way a mother would care for her child. Then, when we are ready, He releases us to go out and nurture others.

Many of us are ready to become mothers in the Spirit, but we aren't assuming our rightful places. We're too selfish to give our time, energy and love to bring up God's spiritual children. We'd rather just vegetate in front of the television. Or sit in an easy chair listening to the latest worship tape. Maybe we think we're too old to have an impact.

But we need to be concerned for our sisters in the Lord as the Shulamite woman described in the Song of Solomon was. “We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she is spoken for?” she and her

brothers ask (Song 8:8). If we don't help our sisters to mature, they may never develop "breasts" themselves and become capable of an intimate relationship with the Bridegroom.

The Shulamite declares of herself, "My breasts [are] like towers" (v. 10). This means she is grown up spiritually—both equipped for intimacy with God and ready to minister to others.

Carriers of His Presence

God is calling women today to be carriers of His presence. He wants us to be like the two milk cows in 1 Sam. 6 that were yoked to the cart carrying the ark of the covenant back to the land of the Israelites. Though the cows had been separated from their calves and would naturally resist leaving, they did not try to turn back. They looked neither to the right nor to the left as they carried out the purposes of God (see vv. 7-12).

In the same way, God wants us to set aside all distractions and allow ourselves to be yoked to Him alone. He wants us to stop being more concerned about externals—our outward appearances, for example—than we are about carrying the sweet savour of Christ wherever we go.

We are so vain that we don't want to cry in church for fear our makeup smudges! And how many of us would offer our shoulders for a sister to cry on when we're dressed in an expensive silk suit? We've got to get our priorities straight! Having perfect hair and nails—when those around us are so desperate for God—is certainly not at the top of the list.

The Bible gives us several examples of women who carried the presence of God. Naomi was one. Her daughter-in-law, Ruth, was willing to follow Naomi anywhere because she recognized the presence of God in her and knew from experience that her "milk" was good.

Deborah was another. She made herself available to the people of Israel to “feed” on her wisdom.

Priscilla, mentioned in the New Testament, was a teacher of the Word, along with her husband, Aquila. Her breasts, like the Shulamite’s, were “like towers”—full of “milk” for new converts.

Are your breasts “like towers”? Are you full of the presence of God? Are you willing to start giving out what God has given you?

In this recent move of God, the theme has been “More, Lord!” But God is saying to some of us, “I’ve already given you enough, daughter. I’m asking *you* for more—start multiplying what you have by sharing it with others. Then you can have more.”

Friends, some of you have breasts that are already full. And they’re going to start hurting if you don’t give the milk away.

Think about how you can reach out and “feed” someone else. “I’ve been through a divorce,” you might say, “and I can help my sister.” You didn’t go through that divorce for nothing! Let your victory over grief and pain minister to another member of the body.

Go to your hurting sister and tell her you’ve been there and you know how she feels. Don’t preach at her or be super-spiritual. Just love her and let her nurse until she’s ready for meat.

When she is, El Shaddai will be waiting for her, ready to feed her Himself, to show her His great love and to empower her to also begin reaching out. Then you will see the fruit of your “childbearing” and experience the “blessings of the breasts and of the womb” (Gen. 49:25) that are the natural product of intimacy with God.

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