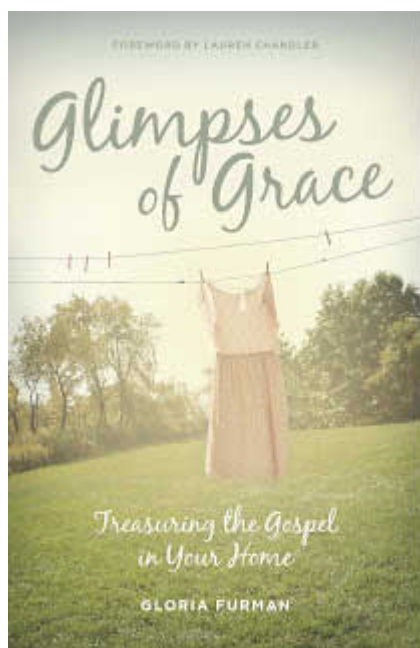


Glimpses of Grace: Knocking Down Mental Walls

One of the most spiritually dangerous mistakes we can make is to compartmentalize our thinking into separate sections: Facts/values. Sacred/secular.

Worst of all, God/real life.

If Jesus truly is Lord—and His word says He is—then there is not so much as a solitary atom, much less an entire compartment, where He does not belong. So I love, love, love it when writers and speakers help us tear down mental and spiritual walls to help us live life as a unified whole. And now there's a new voice to help women think biblically and rightly about how we glorify God in our homes.



This week marks the release of Gloria Furman's book *Glimpses of Grace: Treasuring the Gospel in Your Home*. I've never read a book that so thoroughly explores the way God's grace can so fully and vibrantly radiate into even the most mundane and seemingly unimportant parts of life.

This, on top of the fact that Gloria is a mom of three little

ones with a fourth on the way, a pastor's wife, living in Dubai—and her husband Dave's physical strength is severely compromised, which of course means life is harder for Gloria. So yeah—I'm impressed. But Gloria's bio doesn't hold a candle to her wisdom, her grasp of theology, and what I especially appreciate, a breathtaking level of transparency and authenticity that eloquently communicates, "I'm messed up and I desperately need Jesus, but let me show you how He's so good!"

Her great, dry sense of humor is studded throughout the book, such as: "I need God's grace and something baked with peanut butter and chocolate." What's not to love?

Some of my highlighted passages, which I wanted to share with you:

- When I attended a marriage conference taught by Paul Tripp, he said something that devastated me. Tripp said, "If God doesn't rule your mundane, then he doesn't rule you. Because that's where you live."
- God can use the ordinary moments in your life to glorify himself by conforming you into the image of his Son. That is precisely what he intends to do. Dirty dishes in the sink or red crayons smushed into an electrical socket by a curious toddler are not just worrisome ordeals in your otherwise uneventful day. They're opportunities to see glimpses of grace.
- Jesus apparently believes that the most satisfying thing for us in all eternity is to behold his glory in his very presence. He is not absent from our noisy, chaotic lives. He is with us, even to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). And if he's with us even to the end of the age, then he is with us even to the end of our carpooling route. He's with us even to the end of the meat in the fridge when grocery day isn't for another four days. He's with us even to the end of a

long night of waking with a crying baby. He's with us even to the end of a party that we'd rather not be at or be hosting, for whatever reason. He's with us even to the end of a hectic morning of rushing around trying to get out the door. He's with us even to the end of a dreadful day when nothing seemed to go as planned.

- God's efficacious grace could be described in terms of the different ways you put pajamas on a baby. My son prefers to streak after he takes baths. He even tries to climb out of the tub early before everyone is soaped up and rinsed in order to increase his odds of getting to run around in his birthday suit. . . . But it's all fun and games until a naked baby has an accident on the carpet, so I quickly chase him down to put on his diaper. Some nights he runs away shrieking and hides under tables and behind chairs trying to avoid the inevitable. Some nights he quietly lies on the bed while I diaper him, and he might even stretch his legs into the pajamas I hold up. Either way, whether I have to wrestle his clothes onto him or he peacefully submits to the work I am doing, that boy has never gone to bed without a diaper and pajamas on. Of course, we should love to submit to God's efficacious grace as he purposes to make us more like Christ! But sometimes we're like a naked baby hiding behind the couch, reluctant to hold still and thankfully allow God to work in our hearts and get us ready for what he has next.

- We're destined for joy forever because of Christ's exquisite hospitality in opening a way to God through his own body. We can serve others with gladness, knowing that the carrots we peel and the diapers we change are as unto the Lord. . . . When we show hospitality in this way, we can see how "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). Our role is to serve with the strength God supplies, and it's God's role to do with our service whatever he pleases. He supplies the

strength, and in his abundant hospitality he also gives us joy! God's grace in Christ is for us to enjoy and share with others. When I have this grace in mind, I can see my possessions and others' needs in light of eternity.

- My disgusting kitchen floor and its propensity to absorb filth is a picture of our hearts. No matter how hard we scrub, we cannot erase our iniquity. The shame of our sin is like the phantom stain on a shirt that reappears after you've dried it. The stain is deep in the fibers of the shirt, and when the right temperature of heat is applied, the stain rises to the surface of the fabric. The stain is permanent.

- Not making an idol out of our homes is tricky. I've personally experienced what it feels like to be obsessed with the idea of organization in my home. I thought I was being driven by the maxim "God is a God of order and not chaos." I thought that if everything had a place, then my heart would feel at peace because strict orderliness is godly. But instead of worshiping God, I just wanted to be in control. I was worshiping my image and thought it wouldn't be so bad if others admired me, too. . . .I've also had struggles with the idol of self-expression, seeing my home primarily as an extension of myself. If something was out of place or not just so, then I felt it reflected poorly on my personhood or character. Again I was serving my own image—not God's.

- Jesus is the sovereign Lord over every square centimeter in your home—from the pipes to the television to the mattresses. He is Lord over it, and he desires that you use what he's given you to glorify him. That doesn't mean that your home needs to be perfect by the world's standards or even by your own personal standards, but consecrated by God's standards. . . . In Romans 12:1-2 we see a description of what it means to set ourselves apart for God: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to

present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Since Jesus is lord over all things and God is subjecting all things under his feet (1 Cor. 15:27), including our homes, by his grace we use our homes to worship him.

See why I loved this book? Let the gospel permeate every square inch of your heart and your home. I bet *Glimpses of Grace* can help.

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/glimpses-of-grace-knocking-down-mental-walls/
on June 4, 2013.

Mothering Little Men from Mars

One of the greatest privileges of my life—right after saying “yes” to Jesus and “I do” to my husband—has been mothering my two sons, now 20 and 22.

Several years ago, my husband Ray and I started researching gender differences and discovered the truths in John Gray’s mega-bestseller, [*Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus*](#). It didn’t take long for us to realize that we didn’t have gender-free *children*; we had little men from Mars! And then I started realizing why I sometimes unnecessarily frustrated my kids and

why we didn't connect all the time—because I'm from Venus and they're from Mars, and there is a HUGE gender gap between masculine and feminine! John Gray didn't discover it; God created it, with great delight and a big smile on His face.

For example, boys, being male, are wired to be **self-reliant**. They act like they get extra brownie points for doing something on their own. One of my son Curt's first whole sentences was, "**I** do it!" For boys, accepting help is perceived as weakness. For us relationally-oriented ladies, offering and accepting help is a way to make a heart-connection with another person. So when I would say, "Let Mommy help you," they would be offended and I never knew why. If I could do it over again, I would tell them, "Let's see if you can do it on your own. If it doesn't work, I'll be glad to help."

One of the most powerful lessons I've learned about mothering boys is that the male mind is linear, life is handled only one piece at a time. This impacts both their thinking and activity.

Males tend to think on one thing at a time. I now know that when my husband or sons are reading, it's not safe to start a conversation until I get their attention and they're looking at me. I used to frustrate the dickens out of my sons on soccer game days when they were dressed in their soccer uniforms, their soccer bags were packed, they had their game face on, and there were 15 minutes left before we had to leave. And I, being the ever-efficient one, would try to get them to use that time wisely to clean up the living room or fold laundry. They never, ever, cooperated willingly! And now I know why. I'd love to go back and change that part of mothering.

This linear approach also has a major impact on their activity. They are created to **do one thing at a time** before moving on to the next event. If I wanted their attention while

they were watching TV, I would have to physically stand in front of the screen to break their attention and have them look at me. I, on the other hand, am a natural multi-tasker, because if mothers couldn't do more than one thing at a time, humanity wouldn't last more than one generation. So I would have conversations with my boys or direct homework while doing the dishes or cooking or a multitude of other things. I finally realized that because my kids can't multi-task, they never believed that I was actually paying attention to them if my hands were busy.

Knowing this, I have learned that when they start to tell me something, I put down whatever I'm doing, turn my body to face them squarely, and give them my full physical attention. It's been wonderful to see the difference; they now *feel* I am truly listening. I've shared this insight with several of my friends, who report that it's made a major difference with the boys in their homes as well. Their girls never gave it a thought, because girls intuitively know you can wash dishes and talk at the same time!

Where girls are more verbal, boys are usually **more physical**. I have a friend who wanted her boys to always move quietly and slowly like girls, and had a "no rough-housing" rule in the house. This is the fast track to killing a boy's heart, because boys were made to wrestle and tumble and be loud. This isn't a design defect. It's the way God was pleased to make them. While it's not good to break lamps, of course, boys need to be able to MOVE while their moms smile and let them be who they were made to be.

Another thing I'd go back and change is trying to pry conversations out of my sons. I didn't understand that females naturally generate three times as many words as males, and we talk to build community and knit hearts together. Boys and **men talk for one reason: to convey facts and information**. If they don't have anything to convey, they don't talk. A wise counselor finally explained to me that if I waited for my sons

to initiate conversations on their timetable, I would get what my heart longed for. I also learned that one of my son's love languages is physical touch, and if I would go in at the beginning or the end of the day and silently rub his back, he would often start talking. It's amazing what meaningful conversations can happen at bedtime when the kids are trying to forestall sleep!

John Gray says, and it's my experience as well, that a **man's primary need is to be respected**. It starts when they're very small boys. When a boy's mother shows him respect, especially when it's backed by a father's respect, that fills boys' "respect buckets." Because they are made in the image of God, that alone makes them infinitely valuable and precious and worthy of great respect and dignity. I showed them respect by giving them significant choices, and honoring those choices. It started with choosing their clothes and making various school-related choices, and grew into choices like room colors and what sports they would pursue. I showed them respect by listening to them and not interrupting, by not being sarcastic, and by not saying shaming and condemning things. My son has commented that it's important to remember that kids are "little MEN from Mars," and not talk down to them as inferior beings simply because they are not adults. He is glad we didn't do it, but it really bothers him when he sees grown-ups do it to kids.

One last thing I've learned lately is the importance of supporting and cherishing our children's gender to help them grow into healthy adults. Little **boys need to know that being a boy is a good thing**, and of course the same holds true for girls. After sharing this with a group of mothers of preschoolers, one friend took her little boy for a walk down to the lake. Along the way she said, "Parker, let's look for frogs and toads. Mommy is so glad God made you a little boy so you could like yucky things like frogs and toads." When they got back to the house, his grandmother asked, "So how was your

walk?" and Parker said, "Mommy's glad that I'm a boy because I like yucky things like frogs and toads."

When my first son was born, my mother told me that mothers and sons, and fathers and daughters, have a very special relationship. She was so very right, and I thank the Lord for His good, so very good, gift of my sons.

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This blog post was originally published on February 26, 2002.

The Mother Heart of God

Two days ago we observed Mother's Day in the US. I think Mother's Day matters to God because mothers matter to God. And I think mothers matter to God beyond their necessity for bringing new life into the world, but because women reflect an aspect of God's heart in ways men cannot.

Every aspect of our femininity, it seems to me, comes from God originally. He made females in His image with the feminine attributes and strengths that come straight from the Father heart of God.

The essence of our femininity is expressed in two main ways: responding and nurturing.

One of the most wonderful promises in God's word says, "Call to Me, and I will answer." He says this multiple times, and multiple ways! God is a responsive God. And it honors and glorifies Him when WE respond—to Him, and to others.

Nurture shares the same root word as nurse. I am fascinated by one of the Old Testament names for God, El Shaddai. El means

“strong one,” and Shaddai is a form of the word for the breast. El Shaddai means “The strong breasted one. ”

El Shaddai is the mother heart . . . of God the Father. It’s from the Father we receive a mother’s heart.

I acknowledge that Mother’s Day is painful for some women, especially those who long to be mothers and aren’t. But the heart of a mother isn’t about having given birth. It’s an attitude of the heart, a desire and willingness to nurture others.

El Shaddai longs to nurture and nurse us, if we’ll let Him, and He longs to draw us into an intimate embrace with Him.

I have seen Him bring healing to the hearts of many people as they pressed hard into His breast to receive nurture and comfort. . . and identity. His love is powerful enough to transform a heart that is so riddled with holes that it’s like a spaghetti strainer, and when His love functions like Super Glue to plug up the holes, people’s hearts are transformed into vessels that can hold His love—as well as people’s—instead of draining out. As they receive nursing and nurturing from The Strong Breasted One, He loves and provides for them. I’ve watched it happen multiple times.

I am so grateful for the responsive, nurturing “Mother heart of God”!

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/the_mother_heart_of_god

[Listen to Sue’s message on this topic given at a Dallas-area church](#)

“You’ve Got Feminism All Wrong!”

Dear Sue Bohlin,

I’m writing about your response to “[Probe Answers our E-Mail: Should a Woman Work or Stay Home with the Children?](#)” I would like to express my extreme disappointment in your answer.

First off, I should say that I am young Catholic and a strong feminist. I believe that you have feminism’s mission all wrong. You stated that the “feminist viewpoint values materials above people.” I find this highly contradictory to feminism! Feminism is about equality. Plain and simple. It is difficult to debate the fact that men and women are equal. If so, what does it matter if the father stays home with the children? Why should the female sacrifice her goals in life and be “submissive” to her husband? What makes it okay for the male to follow his goals and watch his wife’s be thrown away? Parenting is a two person thing. The idea that the man is the mighty breadwinner to whom the wife obeys without question passed in the 1950’s. It disgusts me to think that other young women like myself are reading your response. We’re living in the year 2001—the world has changed quite a bit since the time of the bible! Maybe Titus instructs women to stay at home, but we’re far from that. When the bible was written, women were treated badly. Virtually the only thing a woman was good for was cooking, cleaning, and childbearing. In case you haven’t noticed, women do quite a bit more than that today. The contributions women have made to society are immeasurable. If you ask me, Jesus would never say to a female with aspiring hopes and dream the same as her husband, “You stay home because you are a woman, thus the only thing that should do it

take care of the children and the household.” I think Jesus would see the importance of strong parental roles in a child’s life—but equally, both mother AND father. Raising a child where the mother is the only active parent in their life is as bad or worse then sticking the child in daycare their whole life!

There are two things that I would really like the reader to get out of this letter: first, feminism is about equality, not material things. Second, we are not living in the time of Jesus! We should try to be Christlike, not mimic the lifestyle of 33 AD!

Thanks for writing! I am anxious to reply to your letter, but I would like to know one thing first: Are you married? Secondly (I guess that’s two things <grin>), how old are you?

Thanks so much,

Sue

Dear Sue,

Thanks you for your interest in my letter. After rereading it, I want to apologize for seeming...harsh. I’m just opinionated. I think your site is truly wonderful—I’ve had countless questions answered there.

As for your questions, no, I’m not married. I’m 14. I’ve never even had a boyfriend. (Actually, I spend most of my time at the library reading *Ms.* magazine! LOL)

Thanks again for your time—and your part in probe.org.

Thank you SO MUCH for your sweet message and apology and your honesty with me! I am truly delighted to hear that you like our web site and have benefitted from it, especially since you’re 14 and there’s so much to learn. It’s great that you’re reading things from a Christian perspective to help you form your opinions and your worldview!

OK, to answer your thoughts about feminism. . .

First off, I should say that I am young Catholic and a strong feminist.

Not surprising, actually. Feminist philosophy has so permeated our culture that it's unusual to find people who haven't been brainwashed by its values and perspectives. Yes, "brainwashed" is a strong word to use, but it's just as true as the way Communists indoctrinated their students in the last century.

Of course, if you spend your free time in the library reading *Ms* magazine, you are doubly steeped in feminism!

I believe that you have feminism's mission all wrong.

Is it possible that there might be more to feminism than the "public face" that it presents? Is it possible that someone who has spent time investigating the underlying philosophies and values of feminism might have a perspective different from what the rest of the culture accepts without question? And finally, ::::said in a low but respectful voice:::: is it possible that someone who's 48 might know more about this subject than someone who's 14?

You stated that the "feminist viewpoint values materials above people." I find this highly contradictory to feminism! Feminism is about equality. Plain and simple.

Uh. . . no. It's not that simple, _____. Have you ever seen pictures of icebergs? A mountain of ice rises out of the water, but there is another 9/10ths of the iceberg submerged below the water. Feminism is something like that: there are parts of this philosophy that remain hidden until you start digging. For instance, particularly as a Catholic, are you comfortable with feminism's strong insistence on unrestricted access to abortion for all women? Abortion is an essential

part of true feminism. Are you comfortable with the strong link between feminism and a lesbian lifestyle? While there are many many feminists who truly enjoy their femininity and their relationships with men, many of the movers and shakers in feminism have bought into the belief that men are the enemy. Do you plan on marrying and having children? Feminism has an anti-family agenda because it sees children as a drain on women and sees women who stay home to care for children as parasites, choosing a path that has no value because women are not paid for it.

It is difficult to debate the fact that men and women are equal.

Equal in value, absolutely. Equal in function and role, no way! Equal does not mean "same." Men and women are not interchangeable. We have different strengths and gifts, and different perspectives. We not only have different bodies, we have different emotional and mental make-ups. The biology of maleness and femaleness is hard-wired into the brain. Feminism's mantra for many years has been that the only differences are those of plumbing and reproduction. (And those differences are despised. There is a contempt for a woman's capacity for carrying and nurturing babies because of the fact that it makes a woman more vulnerable and needful of care and protection. That's one reason feminists are so insistent on the need for across-the-board access to birth control and abortion, because getting pregnant is so distasteful and threatening to so many of them.)

If so, what does it matter if the father stays home with the children?

Because mothers and fathers are not interchangeable. They nurture children differently. When children are very young, they need their mothers more intensely than their fathers. (But please hear me: children need BOTH a mother AND a father.

It's like asking, "Which do you need more, air or water?" We need both, but air is more immediately essential. It says no more about us not needing water than the idea that children don't need their fathers.)

Furthermore, God's intention is for men to be providers and protectors, and for women to be caregivers and nurturers. This is only construed as an indictment on women because of the way the culture has de-valued the contribution of women. Since we don't put a dollar amount on caregiving and nurturing, those contributions are dismissed as unimportant. (That's why I made my point about feminism being materialistic. Only those things that have been given monetary value are worth doing.) Feminism's contempt for women who are "only a housewife" or "only a mother" has spread to the rest of the culture, where many people hear "caregivers and nurturers" and snort their disapproval of such a lightweight role.

Maybe we ought to ask the kids who have grown up without the caregiving and nurturing, the kids who have had to raise themselves because their parents were so busy doing things that "mattered," if caregiving and nurturing is so unnecessary. And to go back to your original comment, if a father stays home with the kids and the mom works, *when the kids are very small* they are going to feel abandoned by their mother. That's just the way it works. It might not sound fair, but that's because mothers and fathers are not interchangeable.

Why should the female sacrifice her goals in life and be "submissive" to her husband?

OK, two subjects here: goals and submission.

If a woman sets her goals apart from God's values and intent for her life, they are worthless. Once we die and we stand before God, everything will be revealed for what it is. Those who have trusted in themselves and refused to submit to God

and trust in Jesus will go to hell. Of what value will their goals be then? For those who HAVE trusted in Christ, if their goals were self-serving instead of God-serving, then everything they accomplished to meet those goals will burn up in the flames of God's judgment. (You can read about this in 1 Cor. 3:9-15.)

It's like the person who climbed the ladder of success and discovered his ladder was leaning against the wrong wall!

Concerning submission. Why should a wife submit to her husband? Because submission is what we were created to do! We submit first to the Lord and then to those who are in authority over us. I think you have a misunderstanding of submission as "mindless doormat." Biblical submission is a deliberate choice to use one's strengths and gifts to serve another, to fill up what is lacking, to support and respect and yield to another. That is neither mindless nor subservient. (And I think, by the way, that many people hear the word "submissive" and think "subservient." They are not the same thing.)

What makes it okay for the male to follow his goals and watch his wife's be thrown away?

Nothing. God's plan for husbands is that they love their wives the same way that Christ loves the church. That means serving her, supporting her, being her #1 fan, and, as one writer put it, stewarding his wife's gifts so that she becomes everything God wants her to be.

But some women think they ought to be able to pursue their own goals with no regard to what it will cost their family. Children grow up fast, and there is time for women to pursue all kinds of goals after the children are no longer so needy and dependent on her. Are you familiar with Maria Shriver's book *Ten Things I Wish I'd Known Before I Went Out into the Real World*? She says, "You CAN have it all. . . just not at

the same time.” Try to find a kid who will say to his or her mother, “I’m so glad you went out there and pursued your goals, Mom—even though you weren’t there for me and I was left alone to fend for myself so often, but that’s OK, you’re the only one who matters.” Obviously, I’m being facetious, but the message of feminism is, “You’re the only one who matters.” It’s tremendously selfish.

Parenting is a two person thing.

Yes, I agree.

The idea that the man is the mighty breadwinner to whom the wife obeys without question passed in the 1950’s.

I will agree that the concept of the obedient wife who obeys without question was a fallacious concept that needed to be corrected. There is a difference between submission and obedience, although it’s not a huge one. Wives are never commanded in scripture to obey their husbands, and there’s a good reason for that. Obedience belongs in a relationship between non-equals because it’s a power mis-match. I obey God and the governing authorities, my children obeyed me (...though not always. I gave birth to sinners <grin>). Those relationships are not between equals. If a husband-wife relationship, which Scripture explicitly says is one of spiritual equals, is one where the husband is authoritarian and the wife obeys him like a robot, there cannot be the emotional and spiritual intimacy that is God’s plan for marriage.

It disgusts me to think that other young women like myself are reading your response. We’re living in the year 2001—the world has changed quite a bit since the time of the Bible!

We use a clock to tell time, not to tell truth.

The world may have changed, but people haven't. God's created order and His plan for human relationships hasn't changed. The Bible's relevance to our lives is just as vibrant as it was the day each word was originally written, because when God inspired the authors of each book He knew what would unfold in human history in the years to come, and His book has timeless concepts that are just as valid today as when they were written.

Maybe Titus instructs women to stay at home, but we're far from that.

_____, are you in a public school? Are there metal detectors at the doors of your school? Does your school have a lockdown plan for what happens if someone starts shooting a gun like at Columbine? Does your school have a problem with drugs? How many girls are pregnant? Are there any who bring their babies to school?

This is the world we live in—the world that is so far from the place of safety that it used to be. Yes, you're right, moms don't stay home much anymore. . .and the kids are paying for it. Families don't stay together much anymore. . . and the kids are paying for that, too. The amount of respect between family members has dropped dramatically as women demanded to be treated like men, so they are no longer respected the way they used to be, and kids don't respect their parents, and parents are afraid of their kids. . .who are paying for that, as well.

When the bible was written, women were treated badly. Virtually the only thing a woman was good for was cooking, cleaning, and childbearing. In case you haven't noticed, women do quite a bit more than that today.

Yes, I have noticed. The Probe web site you tell me is "truly wonderful" is a woman's creation and responsibility—mine.

Among my women friends are published authors, speakers, company owners, entrepreneurs, engineers, marketers, trainers, teachers, real estate investors, and doctors. And the Bible's pattern for wise living is just as relevant and life-giving to these women as it ever was.

The contributions women have made to society are immeasurable. If you ask me, Jesus would never say to a female with aspiring hopes and dream the same as her husband, "You stay home because you are a woman, thus the only thing that should do is take care of the children and the household."

I agree. The Bible doesn't limit women to only caring for children and homes. There are many ministry opportunities that women are called to give themselves to regardless of family status. There are ways to have a home-based business that does not sacrifice the best interests of a family and smoothly running home. You might want to read Proverbs 31.

I think Jesus would see the importance of strong parental roles in a child's life—but equally, both mother AND father. Raising a child where the mother is the only active parent in their life is as bad or worse than sticking the child in daycare their whole life!

I think perhaps you're either engaging in hyperbole or you really haven't thought through what you're saying. There is no way that a mother's input and love is more harmful to children than the stress of daycare. (Assuming the mother is not evil or mentally ill. It's too bad I have to mention exceptions like this.) You might not know what daycare centers are like. They cannot come close to the power of a mother's love and just "being there" with and for her child. Talk to me about this 15 years from now!

I'm glad you wrote, and I hope you think about these things. I

invite you to read another article I wrote, "[Ten Lies of Feminism](#)," and see what you think. God bless you, _____!

Warmly,

Sue