

“Women of the Church”
By General Pastor Peter F. Paine
Sunday, May 22nd, 2016

You may be seated. It’s great to be here today. I have a few things on my heart to share, but I’ll tell you now, so you can start thinking about it, if you have a testimony about your mother that you’d like to share, we’re going to have a chance to do that in a little bit. Come with me, if you would, to the Gospel of Matthew, twenty-eighth chapter. Let’s set the scene: Jesus had been crucified, not everybody, if anybody, really could understand exactly what was happening. The Disciples didn’t fully comprehend, even though they had been told. And we read:

Matthew 28:1 *In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.*

So here comes Mary and Mary, and they’re going to see the place where Christ where Christ was laid. They want to view the body. They’ve come, evidently, by themselves, very early.

Matthew 28:2 *And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.*

So here come Mary and Mary, they’ve come to view the body. They’ve come to pay their respects. They’ve come to see what was there, and they’re greeted by an angel. The angel sat upon the rock and it says:

Matthew 28:3-4 *His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake...*

So, look at it through the eyes of the keepers for a moment: There’s men who were posted there; they were on duty, they were on guard, they were there to watch, to make sure no one took the body of Christ. Here comes two ladies. I wonder if one of the keepers might have said to the other, “Who are they? What do they think they’re doing?” Two women, they approached the sepulcher, but the angel knew exactly who they were and why they were there. And so we read, let’s read verse four:

Matthew 28:4-5 *And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.*

The angel knew exactly why they were there, he knew what their mission was, he knew what their heart was. He also knew that there were men present who couldn’t understand what was going on.

Matthew 28:6-7 *He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.*

Listen to what they did with the instruction from the angel.

Matthew 28:8 *And they departed quickly from the sepulchre ...*

If that's a word you're not familiar with, the sepulcher is the gravesite, the place where Christ's body was laid. It would have looked like a cave, that's the way it would have looked in that day, and the way they would have covered the opening would be with a large, round stone that would be rolled into place to cover the door. There would have been a small window next to the sepulcher, or next to the door opening. Not big enough for a person to go through, but big enough for a person to look through. And the reason for that window was so that people could come and view the body that had been laid there. And the idea was that, occasionally, when people were thought to be dead, they had not died, they were merely sick unto death, and, so, the body would be laid there, and people could look through the window, and, in the event that someone moved, they could roll the stone away, and provide medical attention, if possible. It happened where people were thought to be dead and were not dead. But, remember that, when the ladies came, the stone was still in place; it was the angel that rolled it away. That stone hadn't been moved, and Christ couldn't get out through the window, and the guards knew that. So, the stone was rolled back, and they looked. The guards knew they had a problem, but the women knew they had a mission.

Matthew 28:8 *And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.*

So, these women went to see Christ, and, although they didn't get to see Christ in that moment, they did get to go tell the disciples, and they put in play what had to be done so that you and I could fully understand the story of the death and burial and the resurrection of Christ. And we know that set in motion the Disciples going about doing what they were supposed to do, and they would hear, in the days that followed, the Great commission, but, remember, it was the women that came and told the Disciples first. We're blessed to have great women in ministry, and, I think it's something that, maybe, we don't talk about enough. Maybe we don't give quite enough credit to. We heard today from great women in the Bible, and, by the way, I think Donna, and each of the women that represented women in the Bible did a great job today.

And, I just want to touch on a few things today before I invite some up for testimony. A woman has power in her words. And I'm just going to visit with you a little bit today. I don't know, women, if you can fully understand how powerful your words are to everyone in your life. I sat, recently, with a man in his early sixties, with tears rolling down his cheeks. He told me that, when he was eight years old, his mother, in a fit of anger, said to him, "I wish you'd never been born." And, now, a grown man, his mother has passed, and he is still wounded today, because his mother said to him when he was a young boy, "I wish you'd never been born." Women, your words have power.

Whenever I have the privilege to be in a place where we're doing ministry, whether it's a message, or a wedding, or a funeral, or whatever it might be, if my wife is present, the most important thing for me, after that event, is to hear from her. Now I love Debbie in every way a man can love his wife, and I have asked her to be my honest critic and tell me where I could have done better and what I could have done better, and she's willing to do that, lovingly and supportively. Seriously. But I can't wait to hear her words of affirmation, and, if she's quiet, I know I did not do well. Women, your words have power, for your children, for your husbands, and for everyone around you. Don't underestimate the power of a loving word. The power of a word of encouragement. The power of your words of affirmation.

Some of you know that I lost the presence of my mother in my life when I was ten years old. She lived until I was twenty-one, but, when I was ten, she had a cerebral hemorrhage, and it let her blind and paralyzed, and in a nursing home for the next eleven years. But I have some great memories of my mother from those first ten years, and I'm thankful for those memories. I remember one day, my brothers and I were in the kitchen, arguing. And it was about almost nothing. But, because of what my mother said, I remember what it was, and so I'll share with you today, that what it was, was, there were two glasses on

the counter, you know, before dishwashers, you'd wash dishes in one sink, rinse them in the next sink, and then you'd set them in the strainer to air dry... And there were two glasses that were dry and clean, and available, and all three of us were going to get something to drink, and we were debating over who did not have a glass available to them. We were too short to reach the cabinet where the glasses were, and, while we were arguing, I went and got the stepstool, and got a glass from the cabinet, and put it on the counter. And my mother observed this, and she said to me, "Peter, blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." And then she looked me in the eye, and said, "Peter, you're a peacemaker." Do you know that she breathed words into me that day that are still part of my DNA today? A woman's words have power; they have great power. Don't underestimate the power of your words, positive or negative. They truly matter. And, women, as I pour my heart out to you, today, pray for wisdom. Ask God to bless you with wisdom that you would say the right words. Words of encouragement, and support, and love, and help, and, yes, correction. You can't praise bad behavior. And I know you know that.

Zig Ziegler told a story years ago—and I know where I'm at, and I know that we're preaching from the Bible today, but I think you'll find some wisdom in the words of this story that Zig Ziegler shared years ago. He said, "When you have to criticize someone, find a way to criticize the performance, but not the performer." And he said, "I'll tell a story to make my point. When I was a boy, I came home from school; it was a beautiful day, and my friends and I had talked about it, as we left the school building that day, we said, 'As soon as we can, let's assemble at the ball park. It's going to be a great day for a ball game.'" And they were off to play sandlot baseball after school, but, when Zig arrived home, and told his mother his plan, she said, "Now, remember, you promised me that you would plant a row of beans in our yard, our family garden." It wasn't a farm, it was a family garden in the backyard. "You promised me you'd plant a row of beans today, so, after you do that, you can go play ball." So, Zig did as you'd expect a young boy to do, he *quickly* planted a row of beans. And, when he came in and announced to his mother he was off to play ball, she said, "Let me see what you've done." She walked out back, and, if any of you have ever planted in a family garden, especially when the soil is dry, you know that when you put the seed in the ground, you water it, so it's not hard to tell where seeds were just planted; there were wet spots down the row where the beans had been planted, and she put her arm on her son's shoulder, and Zig tells the story, "She looked at me with love and disappointment in her eyes, and she said, 'Zig, did you plant these beans?' 'Yes, mom I did.' She said, 'It looks like someone else planted them. I know you can do better than that. It looks like some stranger, someone I don't know has snuck into our yard and planted these beans. The row is not straight; they're not evenly spaced, and I know you, Zig! You know how to plan a straight row of beans. You know how to evenly space the places where they're to be placed in the ground. You better dig those beans up and try again.'" So, Zig dug up every bean in that row and he replanted them, and as might guess, he missed his baseball game that day, but, when he went back to his mother and said, "Come and inspect them now." She stood next to him, and, with a smile on her face, and love in her heart, and words of affirmation on her lips, she said, "Now that looks like a row of beans that my son Zig planted. That's beautiful!" And he said, "I went to bed that night knowing that my mother would hold me accountable for good behavior but also knowing that, even when I failed, she would love me, and she would help me to do better." A woman's words have power. A woman's words can change a life. And a changed life can change a family, and a changed family's life can change a community, and a changed community can change the world. A woman's words have power. And, so, ladies, I'm pouring my heart out to you today: regardless of your age, if you're single or married, young or old, I'm trying to remind you that when words leave your lips, make sure they're words you'll be proud of next week, next month, next year. You see, because my mother didn't say to me when I was a young boy, "I'm sorry you were born," she said, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

And, as I share these words today, I'm quite clear in my mind that some of you might be thinking, "My mother, my wife, the woman in my life didn't have those kinds of words for me; I don't have that

kind of positive experience.” I think that’s why God created church. I think that’s why we have this family. I think that’s why God allowed us to have brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers and this family of influence round us, so we can get what we should have got at home but we sometimes missed.

Men, let me talk to you for a minute. Women, you can just take a break. We all know the law of the farm. Plant corn; get corn. Plant wheat; get wheat. Plant tomatoes; get tomatoes. Plant weeds; get weeds. And I suspect some of us are saying, “Yeah, women, I wish you’d hear what the preacher’s saying.” Well, we’re planting weeds and asking them to plant corn. But, it’s a labor of love that we must do together. But a woman creates the environment, and, since we’re talking about women today, I’ll leave the men alone for a little while, but I think I hear Donna say, “Next week on Snapshot, it’s men of valor.” I love you, church.

I’ve met a lot of men who love their mothers, and have had a very healthy, masculine, strong way of communicating that, but I don’t think I’ve ever met a man who has had greater love, affection, appreciation, thankfulness for his mother than Parrish Lee. And I whispered in Parrish’s ear when I came up, “Do you have a testimony you’d like to share about your mother?” and he didn’t pause, he didn’t hesitate, he didn’t stutter, he said, “Yes, I do.” Parrish, why don’t you come on up and share with us today. Make him feel welcome.

Parrish: I missed last Sunday. As many of you know, my mother passed thirteen years ago. I choose to spend Mother’s Day with my church family, but, after Mother’s Day, I need to go back and see the gravesite of my own mom. No matter what anybody says, when someone passes, you don’t just move on. Everything changes. Life has a new ‘normal’ as you haven’t known it before. Anyway, I’d like to share one thing about my mom: As Ashley was up here, representing the Samaritan woman, there’s a lot in common that the Samaritan woman would have had with my mom. She never married. She listened to one of those guys who talked to women as if “You are the greatest thing ever. Come, and let me show you.” That’s the heart that my mom had, and that’s what she followed. Anyway, she was a single mom—she never married—and, when you hear me talk about my brothers and sisters, generally, you’re hearing me talk about my father’s family. My mother was a single mom up until just before I joined the service, and then she had my younger brother, but, what I do remember, when I was very young, my mom, my mom said to me—I’ve told the story before, how I saved my little pennies for, it seemed like months, to have thirty-two cents, and thirty-two cents would be enough for me to be able to buy both a TastyKake® and a Popsicle®. That’s how long ago it was—thirty-two cents. And, anyway, when I finally got the thirty-two cents to buy that, I remember the day, I remember I ran up to Pops, that local grocery store, I got my TastyKake® and I got my Popsicle®. I wanted to come home; I had everything the way I wanted it to be, where I was going to eat it, and it was a nice, sunny day, it was going to be great, up until my mom waited for me to get back inside the door, and said, “Now, good. Share with your cousin.” And I told her, “No.” And she said, “You have to give him one of them.” And I told her, “I don’t want to.” And she said, “You have to.” And I said, “I don’t want to.” And she said, “You’re going to.” And I said, “Well, he can have them both if I have to share.” And I gave him both. And she laughed at me, because she was trying to show me something. I remember that, because, later on, as my mom took care of kids, I asked her why did she give her effort to a bunch of—she did daycare, and then she did social services for troubled kids. I asked her why did she give her effort for all the people who don’t appreciate her. She said, “Parrish, you are a person that people like to be around, sometimes, but you can’t only think about yourself. You might be an only child, but I’ve been trying to teach you, you can’t just think about yourself.” And that has been the message, both what my mom saw in me, and what she spent her life putting in me. The power of a mom.

So, come with me, if you will, to the Gospel of John, the second chapter. We find Jesus, and His Disciples, and His mother, and they're in Cana of Galilee, and those of you who are familiar with the passage know that they're there for a wedding. And, they gathered at this wedding because they had been invited. And, there's going to be a lesson here, and many of you who are familiar with the passage know that they ran out of wine at that wedding, but that's not the point that I want to draw from this text today. So, we begin in verse one:

John 2:1-4 *And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, **Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.***

That could be a confusing passage; I think I have a context for it. I think He said, "Mom, I don't think it's time for me to step up, just yet." Now, we know who Jesus was, and Jesus knew who Jesus was, and Jesus' mother knew who Jesus was, and Jesus didn't know His mother knew. If you're with me, say amen. And His mother—now, wait a minute, it doesn't say His mother slapped Him. It doesn't say His mother corrected Him. Jesus had just told His mother, "Don't be telling Me it's My time, mom. It's not My time, mom." And Mary didn't even speak to Jesus net; she spoke to someone else. And, before I read it, I want to tell you what I think I would hear today, if she said it: She turned to the Disciples and said, "He's going to lead; follow Him." So, what she was saying to Jesus when she was speaking to the Disciples was, "My Son has greatness in Him. He may not understand me in this moment, but He has greatness in Him. And, the way that greatness is going to work, right now, is, He's going to give you some instructions, and you're going to follow them." Mary took charge.

John 2:5 *His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

So, I think what Mary said to the disciples, and thereby said to Jesus was, "It is Your time." And, sometimes, women, it's time for you to tell your sons and your husbands is, "It is your time. It's time to step up." Now, I could make the case that there's times where husbands and fathers to lead and to step up and don't wait for anyone to tell you, and there's a case for that, but, right here, today, we're talking about women, so I think I should remind you women that sometimes you know what he doesn't; whoever 'he' is. Sometimes you need to tell him, "Step up." But, women, if you tell him to step up, you'd better let him know that you won't be absent. Notice that Mary didn't leave when she said that. Mary wasn't walking out of the door when she said, "Whatever he says to do, do it," she was standing right there, saying, "And I'm going to watch it work! And I'm going to watch it work!"

Women, you don't know the power of your support. So, I said to you that a woman's words have power, and now I'm saying to you, a woman's support has power. A woman's support has power. Women, when you support your man, and sometimes that's your son, sometimes it's your father, sometimes it's your brother—hello? Hello? When you support your man, you can't possibly put a value on that of how big it is. It is enormous! And, men, I want to talk to you for just a moment: If you're not feeling that from your woman, tell her you need it. Tell her you need it. Do you know that I've aid to my wife—and you've got to hear this in love; I'm trying to help somebody today. I'm willing to be transparent, and vulnerable to help somebody today. Do you know, I've said to my wife, "Debbie, I fully embrace when you're my honest critic; I've asked you to be that. I need to see through your eyes you'll see things I don't see. You'll get what I don't get. I'm okay with you telling me, 'Hey, Pete, did you see that? Did you notice this?' I'm okay with that. You know, I've got to hear from you when you think I'm doing good, too. I've got to hear from you when you think I did all right." I might be big, and I might be strong, but I'm not too big or too strong to admit that I need some help from the woman in my life. And I know there's some

single men here, and you might be thinking, “What does this have to do with me?” Well, I said it a little bit before; I’ll bring it back right now: That’s what God gave us this family for. That’s what God gave us this family for. Hello? Hello? Some of you sons are thinking, “I hope my mom hears this,” and some of you husbands are hoping, “I hope my wife hears it,” and some of you men are saying, “I hope my church family hears this. I need to know that I’m valued, and loved, and appreciated, and when I do something, it matters.” And, if your husband could tell you how valuable those words of encouragement are, it would be hard for him to put a price on them.

I’ve decided not to speak about Esther, today, I think it was handled very well, but, in preparation for today, I was studying a little bit about her, and I said Esther—I didn’t mean Esther, I meant the Queen of Sheba. I mixed up in my mind where I was going, there, can you forgive me? And when the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon to visit and to sit in his court, and to get wisdom, it’s a powerful, beautiful story. I’m not going to take the time to go there; I thought I would, but I’ve gone a different direction. It’s too late to go back. So, when the Queen of Sheba came to get wisdom from Solomon—that was what she was there for—and, if you read the text, she was impressed with his possessions, but not nearly as impressed as she was with his relationship with God. And she brought him some gifts, and I’m told the calculations come out to, what she brought him—just the gold portion of what she brought him, and there was other things—would be like 3.5 million dollars today. I’d like her to visit me. We can all chuckle at that, but, remember, she wasn’t coming for any other reason than to get his wisdom. Women, let your men know that you’re hungry for them to have a right relationship with God. Did you get what I got from that? Are you with me, Saints? Let your men know, your brother, your husband, your—Let the men in your life know that you’re hungry for them to have a relationship with God that spills over. When their cup runneth over with a right relationship with God, with wisdom from God Almighty, when they have that in their life, it must be shared with others. Women, let you men know—you know what? Men want to please their women. Let your man know that what you want is a Godly man. Amen? Let him know that that’s what impresses you. Let him know that that’s what matters. You know, Debbie likes lots of my qualities. Sometimes she’ll tell me she thinks I’m good looking, and don’t you know that feels good to me? After forty years of marriage, that she still thinks I’m good-look—I don’t know if she means it, but I’m glad to hear it any time she says it. I’m convinced she means it, because I want to be. But, you know what she finds attractive is when I lead. I’m not saying that to talk about Debbie and I, I’m talking to women today, because you’ve got to let your man know. There’s power in your support. And if you lost my—I took some rabbit-trails, there, but, if you lost where I’m at, when Mary said to the Disciples—excuse me, the servants. The Disciples were there, but she was actually talking to the servants, “Whatever He says to do, do it!” Do you know how a man loves to her his woman give him that kind of support? He’s going to lead, and he’s going to win, just follow him! Trust him! Amen? Good God Almighty, you don’t know how—your words can just take a man down to his knees! I have had my spirit crushed by a negative look from my wife. Now, don’t start judging her; she’s given me nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine great looks to one negative one. Sorry, guys, I got the best one. And I’m right about that. Sorry. You could be second, maybe, I don’t know. It’s up to you to fight it out about that; I got first. So, don’t hear what I’m not saying, but I’ve been crushed by one negative look, one shake of the head. I thought I was going to preach today, Parrish.

Women in the Bible have power. By the way, you know, we all like to talk in the Book of Acts about Philip and the eunuch, and what great men they were, you know, how powerful the eunuch was, and what great power he had, and what a great position he had, but, who was his queen? Candace. Right? He was travelling on her dime, by the way, when he got saved. The chariot might have had his name on it, but it belonged to Queen Candace.

Who has a testimony you’d like to share about your mother? I know somebody here is just—Greg, come on up here. And then, Maria, you’re after Greg. There’s something powerful here, today. There’s a shift here, today, I feel it taking place. A way to communicate with each other that God’s going

to really honor, if we'll look to Him for wisdom, and how to do it. Amen? And this is not superficial stuff. This matters. It's life-changing.

Greg: I'll be quick. It's about a boy with a bad heart, and a mom with eight kids. I recently heard that I needed a heart transplant; this was in '97 or '96. And, this was before God healed my heart. But, at the time I was going through it, it was—I didn't know if I was going to live another year. The doctor said I needed a heart transplant, and, at the time, my heart was not really beating properly; it was working, but it was barely working. So, anyway, this one day, I went to my mom's house, and she felt bad for me. She said, "I wish I could make you feel better. And, needless to say, I'd been to the doctor, and the doctor said, "Well, you've got to cut this out. No more red meat, no more pork. You know, you can have chicken, but not fried." And a whole list of things that I should not eat that I had been eating. Well, my mom, when I visited her that day, she was frying chicken. And, she was like, really sympathetic towards me, and she said, "I really wish there was something I could do for you, but I can pray for you. Meanwhile, I know you're not supposed to have this, but I've got a piece of chicken." I said, "Mom, I'm not supposed to eat fried chicken." She said, "I know, but this is what I have to offer you right now. You can take it if you want. You don't have to." So, I sat there, and I took a piece—I couldn't resist her chicken. And, right away, with that first bite, I felt like I was at home again. You know, it was, "Yes! This is really good!" But, the point I'm trying to make is, needless to say, I did feel better after eating that piece of chicken, I really did start feeling better. I didn't know why, but she had been praying for me, and, what I realized was my mom couldn't always do everything she wanted for her children, but she did what she could, and she gave what she had. That's what I wanted to say.

Are you being encouraged by these testimonies about mothers today?

Maria: I hope I don't cry. But, when Pastor Paine first said if anyone wanted to share about their mom, I said, "I don't want to go up there." But, it was laid on my heart, I can't just sit there and not say something about my mom. I don't know if I can get through this, because, when I was ten, I had a dream that both my parents died. And I woke up, crying profusely, and I went into their room, sat at the end of the bed, and she woke up. She said, "What's wrong?" So we went downstairs, we had a house, at the time, but she was calming me down, and the words that she told me were, "Tell the devil to get thee hence." And you don't know how many times I have to say that. So, those words really stuck with me, because she laid that foundation, along with my dad, but I'll never forget that. Being as old as I am now, well, that's something I'll always remember. And, my mom, right now, she's in a nursing home, for the past eighteen years. She suffered a stroke, so, all she does is eat and go to sleep; that's her life. When I go and see her, now I get to share with her, so I just thank God for that blessing. And, I think that we, as women, that have sons and daughters, we need to do the same, because that foundation needs to be laid with our kids, just as our moms gave it to us. Thank you.

We have one more—I guess two more testimonies about moms. Mike, come on up, and sit in the front row, and you're going to be right after I share this third point in my message.

A woman's consistency has power. A woman's consistency has power. Stay the course, ladies. Don't get weary in your well-doing. Don't get weary in your well-doing. It's your consistency that brings strength to the family. Spend some time in Proverbs 31, and read about the qualities of this Godly woman. And remember that, when the devil says it's time to quit, say, "Get thee hence, Satan." 'Cause when the devil tells you it's time to quit, he knows that it's about time for him to get beat. Your consistency brings power to the family.

Mike, come on up and share.

Mike: I won't be too long, but, I was adopted at age three, and I have—when I was younger, I would always defile on alcohol and drugs, and my mom, she would always tell me, pick it up, try to discipline me, and this and that, and I used to always tell her, how rebellious I was about being adopted. So, one day, my mom said, "Just because you didn't come out of my tummy, you came out of my heart." So, that's why I have my spirituality in my mind, and it just burdens me, my soul, today. Because I never thought about how meaningful and profound those words that she would communicate with me. That's all I have to say.

Becky, come on up. I met Becky in Africa. So did Malcolm. But Malcolm had more prayer over that whole situation than I did. "That's a fact," he said. Amen.

Becky: Hi. I didn't grow up with my mom telling me, "I love you," every day. And hardly ever-- at that time, it was a different kind of love. Just by her works, the things that she did, for me and my siblings. I remember it was my common exam, and she had taken some coconuts, some produce of coconuts to the store, waiting for the money to come in, and it hasn't, and, the night before, it was pouring, and my mom has to go out in the rain, to go to my auntie's house in the hill, to get the money, so I will make it to the exam. And that was just a glimpse of how kind my mom was. Not just to us, but to other people. Every night, we would carry food from our house to her friend's house, and to, almost, to the other side of town, because she knew some of her friends would not have food. But, the biggest impact was when my mom passed away. At her funeral, I would say about sixty percent of the people, I did not know them. They were not relative of us, and they were not from my mom's church. They were just strangers, and people that my mom has touched. And that impacted my life so much that I just wanted to do better when I meet somebody, be kind, as a mom, and she always tell me, "If you don't anything to say to somebody, don't say anything at all. Because your words may go so far, you don't even know what affects your words can be." So, as a mom, I hope I could be half as good of a mom as my mom was. And I'm also grateful that, here, I see that, even though I'm thousands away from home, I see Debbie, I see Sister Paine, I see Mister Laygoze's wife, and so many people, makes me feel like I have so many moms here, that makes me so that I don't miss my mom so. So, whatever you say to somebody, as a mom, or, even if you're not a mom, as a woman, make sure they are kind words, and they are going to edify that person, and make them a better person.

In Proverbs, we read in thirty-one, about a woman who is wonderful. I'm going to pick it up in verse twenty-seven.

Proverbs 31:27-28 *She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.*

Debbie, would you come and share a testimony about your mom?

Debbie: Well, as I was growing up, before Christian Fellowship, my dad was a minister in an organization. And, we were very poor. My mom and dad both worked. We moved every couple of years. We would go someplace where the church was about to close the door because no one was there, we would build it up, and when it was thriving, we would move on to another church. One of the things that I learned as a young child was the incredible work ethic that my mom had, and still has. My mom talks, probably ninety percent more now than she did when I was growing up. I can recall just her quiet strength, and her support, and never complaining, and then, as Christian Fellowship started being formed, she worked all of the time. And she worked in factories. She wasn't an educated woman, so she, you know, she wasn't working in an office, she was working in factories. She worked at Abbots forever, and one of

the great things that I think has been instilled in me is work ethic, from my mom. And, Like Pete said, I've never been a quiet person, but, as I watch her, and, especially, being an adult, and having my own children, her quiet strength is sometimes so incredibly powerful that it's just mind-blowing. Even when she didn't agree with my dad, or understand, I realize, as an adult, that she always sought for the understanding, and she supported him, even when she didn't agree or understand, because she had enough faith that that would come, in time. And, so, I feel that I have had an incredible example of great work ethic, of great faith, and being steadfast. And, I would like to say to each of you, her being the mother of our ministry, if you don't communicate with her in some manner, you are losing such a valuable, precious gift. She's eighty-two, her health is very good, but, she's just like any other older person, things are starting to slip. Her hand, she has tremors in her hand, so she doesn't write. And she appreciates any cards that you send, but I would encourage you to send your own, and Sonia would be happy to give you the address. I would like to encourage you to reach out to her, because she has always been there, for each and every one of us. Not just our family; our family was never put first. The church family was always put first. And she's worked hard, and so, I would encourage you to receive that special blessing, by just reaching out and encouraging her, now that she's in her later years, because she loves each of you dearly, and she prays for you. And Great Lakes is so precious to her heart. She has watched each of you grow. She watched Mary Ogden come, as a young lady with an infant, when we first met Mary Ogden. And Mary received her license today as a women's ministry leader. Sonia and Donna came when they were teenagers. And she's just so proud of each of you, and I feel honored that I get to share her with you. But she has a wealth of knowledge. And, so I would like to say that I am the woman I am today because of her work ethic, her steadfastness, and her strong faith in God.

I want to close with this thought, that a woman's purity has value. A woman's purity has value. The society we live in puts way too much emphasis on sexuality; it's just a fact. I don't think it can be denied. And, women, you have tough challenge, to help men see you as a woman of God, because men are programmed, by our society, to look at women as objects, and that's not God's intention. Women are not property; they're not objects. They're people. And, women, when you have godliness in your life, your purity affects your environment. I love our church family, and one of the things I love about it is that, when done properly, men and women can interact with each other in a very healthy and proper way. And, women, I'm going to share something with you that I have shared with many men, through the years, but I don't think I've ever shared it with a woman in our church. A lot of times a man will come to me, and he'll tell me that he has thoughts about a woman, that are perhaps not entirely appropriate for him to have about her. I'm talking about thought of a sexual nature. And I say to that man, "Think of her as if she were your sister, your biological sister." I have a sister; she's close to my age. She's very pretty. I have never had a sexual thought about my sister. Malcolm says, "Say that again." It was hard enough saying that once, Malcolm. But, you know, women, you can remind men, you're their sister, and, if they think of you otherwise, they shouldn't be talking to you. Your purity has great value in the body of Christ, and don't let men treat you like objects. You have the right to put men in their place, and say, (pointing to his own eyes) "Eyes here. I'm not an object; I'm a human being, and the nature of our relationship is brother and sister." If we get that right in the body of Christ, we can do a lot more together, and a lot more effectively. The devil is in the details, and the devil will try to ruin anything that is healthy. Let me tell you something that's healthy: A strong family. A strong family where brothers and sisters can talk to each other, hug each other, work side by side, and keep their thoughts pure. Am I saying that plain enough? And, so, I hope what I've done, in front of everybody, is, make sure, women, you have the power to tell a man, "Get your mind right."

When God was creating the heavens and the earth, and I'll close with this, the first six things He did, He said it was good. Then, He looks at Adam, and He says it's not good. It wasn't that Adam wasn't good; it wasn't good that Adam was alone. He said he needed a woman. Women, men need you. Not

just husbands, but the whole family, the whole body of Christ. Women, you're valuable; you're precious. Your words have power; your actions have power. Your purity has power. You matter to the body of Christ. And if the devil ever tells you that you're not as valuable as the men in this ministry, Maria, you said it, "Get thee hence, Satan." I'm very, very thankful for the women in this ministry. And, I'm thankful for strong men, but that's not what I'm preaching on today. So, women, pray for wisdom; that's why the Queen of Sheba went to be with Solomon, to get more wisdom. Pray for wisdom. "How would You have me strengthen this body?" "How would You have me strengthen my husband?" if you have a husband. "How would You have me strengthen my sons?" if you have sons, one or more. A father, if you have a father. "How can I strengthen this family?" "How can I be a better sister to my brothers? A better woman of God to You?" I am moved, today, by the privilege to be here. I respect and appreciate you more than you know; more than I could possibly find words to share with you. This time of worship today has nourished me. And I don't know if you would consider what I've done today bringing a message or not, but I know I've received one, and it's been through what happened through the interviews, and through the testimonies, and through looking at the Word of God about the power of women in the Bible today. God bless you.

