

"BUILDING A HOME"

A Sermon By

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INTRODUCTION

An interesting idea recently surfaced in The New York Times Sunday magazine section. It's a video tape produced by Quality Video of Minneapolis entitled, "Video Baby". And it's designed for customers who are devoted to family values but can't seem to find the time to start a family. This 30-minute tape shows two infants doing what babies tend to do...like crawl around the house, play with a rattle, take a bubble bath and turn lunch into a complete mess.

There's no narrator and no clean-up...so once the tape is in the VCR, there's nothing to come between the viewer and the baby but the OFF-BUTTON. Of course, some things are left out...like crying and spitting up, not to mention the challenge of the dirty diaper. As the package says,

"Enjoy bath time without being splashed,
and meal time without wearing the food."

Sounds good. All the joys of parenthood and none of the inconveniences. Just set the VCR and watch and imagine the possibilities for "Video Teen-Ager".

MOTHER'S DAY

Today is Mother's Day and what a challenging time to be a mother. One mother, named Linda Rossetti, says she was so pleased that the brightly striped sweater she had received as a gift seem to have a delightful and slimming effect on her figure.

"That's a pretty sweater, mom" said her ten year old son. "You look like Wheel Of Fortune". "Thank you, sweetheart" replied Linda...."But I think you mean that I look a bit like Vanna White". "No, Mom" said the boy, "I mean you look like the wheel!" OUCH!

Yes, it's challenging to be a mother, but what a privilege and what a responsibility. Do I hear an "Amen" for that?

TV Anchorman, Dan Rather, has traveled the world to report to us on most of the major events of our time. A witness to wars and natural disasters and man's inhumanity to man, Rather tells us in his book, The Camera Never Blinks Twice, of a moment from the Vietnam War that still haunts him. His guide took him below-deck to a very large room filled with soldiers recovering from amputations. He describes the horror he felt as he observed row upon row of young men lying there in bandages. All were horribly wounded and in tremendous pain. Most men were moaning. A few cried out and the one name the men cried out constantly was "Mother". When their suffering was so great as to be unbearable, they didn't call for a doctor or a nurse, but rather for their mother. Dan Rather comments that in our very worst moments, when we are most desperate for comfort, we turn instinctively to the first love we ever knew, that of our mothers.

There's no relationship on earth more intimate than the relationship of a mother and her child...unless it is the relationship between a believer and God. It is good that we should have this day to celebrate the home and all it means to us. Our world was designed for love, for family, for relationships and intimacy.

A closing story that conveys the message of today's final point. Patty Clairmont's heart just sank when she saw that she had been assigned a middle seat on the airplane flight. She hated the discomfort and the inconvenience of squeezing into a middle seat between two people who would most likely hog the arm rests. But...nothing good can come from a bad attitude, so she turned her attention to a polite young man on one side of her. His name was Michael.

Patty guessed correctly from Michael's impeccable manners that he was a member of the Armed Forces. Turns out, he was just returning from a year and a half in Desert Storm. Michael was nervous about returning home, afraid that his family was expecting a hero. He was afraid of crying in front of everyone. He had been away...in the company of rough and tough men, and often in some difficult situations. He didn't know how much he had changed or how much of his family had changed. He was looking forward to TWO THINGS when he got off the plane: telling his mother how much her letters had meant to him, and hearing his little nephews call him Uncle Michael.

Patty, a mother herself, was able to offer a sympathetic ear. She told him about her son's return from fighting in Guam years ago. When he got off the plane, he pulled Patty into a long and heartfelt hug. It had meant the world to her. Before the plane landed, Patty informed the flight attendant about Michael's time in Desert Storm and the attendant, in turn, notified the pilot who then announced over the intercom:

"It has come to my attention that we have a VIP on board. ~~He is~~ returning ~~off~~ from Desert Storm and is in seat 12F. As a representative of this airline and a citizen of the United States of America, I salute you, Michael, and say thank you for a job well done."

And with that announcement, the other passengers broke out into enthusiastic applause.

After the plane landed and the passengers filed off, Patty lingered near the waiting area, hoping to see Michael reunited with his family. She spotted them almost immediately. It wasn't hard to tell who Michael's mother was. As soon as she spotted her son through the crowd she began to cry and then to sob until the tears spilled on to the floor. Michael went to the sobbing woman and wrapped his arms around her for a long hug. After general hugs all around, Michael and his family headed down to the baggage claim area to wait for his luggage. A little boy scampered over to Michael and tugged his slack. Michael lifted him up into his arms and someone asked the youngster, "Honey, who's got you?" And the little boy answered back, "Uncle Michael"!

Michael, of course, was most fortunate to have such a home to come back to. Everyone needs that. Everyone. And that is why Jesus told a parable long ago about a young man who went off to a far country and came back home defeated and in terrible disgrace. But his father welcomed him home with open arms. Everyone needs a home like that. A home where they learn a healthy sense of their own identify...and where they are taught principles and values that will last a lifetime. And everyone needs to know they can always go back home. Mushy sentimentality? No - not at all...just some authentic Christian faith for that is the love that God has for each and everyone one of us. Never forget that.

PRAYER

Make us sensitive, O God, to Your presence...to Your nearness in these moments. We believe that the deepest things within us are stirred up in our times of worship....and that down below the surface of our lives, Your spirit is striving to bring forth the highest and the best that we are meant to be!

Wrestle with us until we are conquered by Your love. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who knows His sheep by name and who gently calls them home to Himself. In His spirit, we pray. Amen.

WORK IN

Remember what Buck Showalter once said about his mother.

"She told me to be like a duck! Be calm on the surface and paddle like hell underneath". "And that's what many of us have tried to do!"