

John 17:1-11  
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## Taryn Dawn Farr's Parent-Child-Church Dedication

### "Be Careful"

Mothers have pet sayings. Each of us has indelible script forever imprinted upon our minds of sayings from our mothers. Recently, I saw some quotes from famous mothers, which I found amusing. Humpty Dumpty's mother: "Humpty, If I've told you once, I've told you a hundred times not to sit on that wall." Paul Revere's mother: "I don't care where you think you have to go, young man. Midnight is past your curfew!" Columbus' mother: "I don't care what you've discovered, Christopher. You still could have written!" Michelangelo's mother: "Why can't you draw on the walls like the other children? Do you have any idea how hard it is to get that stuff off the ceiling?" Napoleon's mother: "All right, Napoleon. Take your hand out of there and let me see what you're hiding!" Mona Lisa's mother: "After all that money your father and I spent on braces, Mona, that's the biggest smile you can give us?" Albert Einstein's mother: "But Albert, it's your senior picture. Can't you do something about your hair?" Batman's mother: "It's a very nice car Bruce, but do you realize how much the insurance is going to cost?" Goldilocks' mother: "I've got a bill here for a broken chair from the Bear family. Do you know anything about this, Goldie?" Little Miss Muffet's mother: "All I've got to say is, if you don't get off your tuffet and start cleaning your room, there'll be a lot more spiders around here!" George Washington's mother: "The next time I catch you throwing money across the river, you can kiss your allowance good-bye!" Jonah's mother: "That's a nice story, Jonah. Now tell me, where have you *really* been for the last three days?"

Mothers have their sayings. Today is my mom's 77<sup>th</sup> birthday; one of her favorite sayings offered to her children is "Be careful." If I was going to ride my bicycle or skateboard to a friend's house, she would always say, "Be careful." I don't think that the instruction was a result of prior carelessness or a reflection on my character. I was not a clumsy kid or even a reckless child. But she always said, "Be careful."

When I got my driver's license, the adage was verbalized even more regularly, maybe rightfully so for that time in my life. Whether in the car with me or not, when I drove, she would say, "Be careful."

Even after I was married, when I would leave my parent's house, my mother would say, "Be careful." By this time, I was in my late twenties. It was as automatic as saying "Good night" before going to bed or saying the blessing before eating a meal. One day as I was leaving, she said, "Be careful," and I startled her with my response. I said, "Mama, I think instead of being careful today, I'll just drive as recklessly as I can."

She gave me a puzzled look. I then said, "Why do you always tell me, 'Be careful?' Do you think I will willingly endanger mine and Jennifer's lives? As an adult, don't you think that I am responsible enough to take care of myself?"

She said, "I say it because I care about you and I want you to look out for the other drivers too." My mom rarely says "Be careful" to me anymore; she now says "Drive safely" or "Have a good trip."

Today, when I tell my children to be careful, the words are generally spoken in relationship to a hot pot on the stove or the usage of a sharp kitchen knife.

"Be careful" are watchwords for many mothers. If you are a mom, no matter how old your

offspring, you may find yourself uttering these two words when your child is going somewhere. It is an automatic “mom-phrase.” Parents feel the urge to say something in hopes of projecting a caring attitude and saying ‘be careful’ is an easy one to mutter. It is generally not a reflection of *personality*, but a reflex of *parenting*.

In our Gospel Lesson today, we read where Jesus was meeting with his disciples in the upper room. He had shared his last supper with them. John goes into great detail of the conversation that Jesus had with his disciples. Knowing that he was leaving them, Jesus wanted to give them a word of encouragement; he wanted them one more time to know that he cared for them. Essentially, if Jesus had been a mother, he might have just said, “Be careful.”

Instead, he verbally prayed for them. Aloud, Jesus prayed for the twelve disciples. Many scholars have called this prayer “Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer.” They had finished the Passover meal, and Jesus was thinking about his crucifixion, which would occur within the next 24 hours. He knew he was about to leave his disciples alone in the world, so he went before God as a priest would, to intercede for them, to pray for them. Let’s look how Jesus told his disciples “Be careful.”

In the verse preceding our text, verse 33 of chapter 16, Jesus said “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” And then Jesus prayed. Knowing the end was in sight, he prayed, “Father the time has now come. Do what you have to do so that you may be glorified.” Jesus’ concern was unselfish and God-centered. “God, do what is best, no matter what it costs me.” Unfortunately, *Jesus’* prayer is a bit unlike *our* prayers. We tend to ask for *this* and tell God how we need *that*. Jesus instead focused on what *God* wanted.

Jesus had been given all authority over all people. Authority of this magnitude *had* to be given by God. Because of this authority, Jesus could also give eternal life. In his prayer, Jesus explained what eternal life is. Eternal life is a relationship with Jesus. It begins the moment that a person accepts Jesus as savior. Relationship is the key. It is in this third verse that Jesus delivers the meaning of eternal life and in essence the meaning of life itself. He says, "Now, this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

So it comes as no surprise that Jesus deals with this question and answers it. Surprisingly, the answer is not given in the context of an argument with the Jewish leaders or in a discussion with his disciples, and it is not given in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus dealt with so many fundamental issues. It is telling that Jesus dealt with the meaning of life in the context of prayer.

In essence, Jesus said, "The meaning of life is this: that you have a relationship with God, and me God’s Son, Jesus Christ." And that’s the long and short of it! Everything about being a Christian revolves around the relationship with Jesus.

In his prayer, which was verbalized in front of his disciples, Jesus said, “I have been a reflection of you; I have brought you glory. By following what I was to do, I have made you as my parent proud.”

In Steven Covey's best seller [The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People](#), he talks about how we can lose sight of our main goals in life. In no other place are the consequences more destructive than in our families. Covey writes: "I value my children. I love them, and I want to help them. I value my role as their father. But I don't always see those values. I get caught up in the ‘thick of thin things.’ What matters most gets buried under layers of pressing problems, immediate concerns, and outward behaviors. I become reactive. And the way I interact with my children every day often bears little resemblance to the way I deeply feel about them." (Steven Covey. [The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People](#). New York: Free Press. 1989. p. 105)

For us parents . . . to be *truly* known by our children would be wonderful. Here in Jesus' prayer it was his first thought that *we* might know the Father and the Son. This, he said, is salvation. You

want to know what being saved means, what the meaning of life is? It is written here in Jesus' prayer: "If you will come to know God, the only *true* God, and the Son whom was sent, you will be saved."

Some might say this is difficult to do--to know God. Indeed, it is. It is difficult for any person to do all by yourself. But it is not difficult for *God* to be made known to any of us.

Jesus concluded the first section in his prayer by saying, "Now, restore me to the status which I had at creation." Whom have you glorified by the way *you* live? Children give glory to their parents by the way they act. When we would misbehave as children, especially in public places, I can remember my father say, "Act as if you have some raising." He understood that idea; when we acted up, especially in public, our behavior communicated what we had been taught.

Jesus then changed his *focus* of the prayer. He turned his attention to an *intercessory* prayer; he began to pray for others, specifically those gathered in the upper room . . . specifically the disciples. Jesus offered himself to his disciples. They were chosen. They were obedient. They followed. Verse 30 of the previous chapter indicated that the disciples said, "Now we can see that you know all things, and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God." In the upper room, they believed, and they professed this belief.

Jesus, in his prayer, told God that the disciples now knew that everything from Jesus had come from God. He was saying that the disciples finally got it. It was the end of the line, but what he had been teaching for three years was finally sinking into their heads. The same has certainly been echoed by parents today. Over and over, we may try to teach our children a certain way and hope that in the end, they remember.

Jesus had served as a mouthpiece, and the disciples believed the words of God. Without doubt, they had believed that Jesus was from God, that Jesus was legitimate.

Finally, Jesus, in their presence, said, "I *pray* for them." Prayer is a powerful tool. Knowing someone is praying for you is an incredible source of encouragement. When praying aloud for someone in their presence, I can notice the difference in their countenance after saying AMEN. Knowing that another is praying for us gives us strength to face uncertainty and darkness. Recognizing that God is part of the process can bring comfort. Acknowledging a person before God indicates that another shoulder is helping to carry the load. Prayer is powerful.

Karl Barth, the great theologian once said, "To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world." (<http://www.erowid.org/spirit/prayer/prayer.shtml>) When we pray for another person, we are calling on God to bring order to the chaos, to remind the person that somewhere out there is an entity that cares deeply for them, someone that will never leave them, and someone who can help.

Jesus, as God's Son, told His Father, that all I have is yours, and all you have is mine. Families are like that. What's mine is yours and what's yours is mine is a means of sharing which Jesus modeled.

Because Jesus was leaving the earth, he wanted his followers to know that they were in good hands. He had already told them of the Holy Spirit and how that they would be comforted. He asked God to protect them, to watch out for them. Seeking the help of their Heavenly Father, Jesus asked that they be one as he and the Father were one. He prayed for their unity and their safety. He prayed for their long-term needs. And they heard the prayer on their behalf. It came at a most difficult time, one when he was leaving. He wanted them to "be careful."

In our text, Jesus prayed for two things. He prayed that we might know God, and he prayed for our protection from the world. Godly parents offer the same prayers. Godly parents want their children to know God and also pray that God will protect them. A mother's love is often conveyed as the strongest love someone will ever experience. While not diminishing my own mother's love for me, I can with all confidence declare that the love of God, as evidenced by Jesus Christ, is far greater than

any love that a mother can exhibit.

So today, let us be appreciative for the teachings and sayings of our mothers and fathers, for they are expressions of love. Let us be thankful that our God wants a relationship with us and wishes you and me no harm. Let us be grateful that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Oh, and one more thing, be careful.