

Louisa May Alcott's Insightful Advice for Young Women

Google's Doodle greeted me this morning with the reminder that November 29th is Louisa May Alcott's birthday.

Alcott, the famed author from the late 1800s, was a bit of a mover and shaker in society, particularly in her roles as an abolitionist and feminist.

Yet Ms. Alcott's feminism wasn't quite the categorization we consider it today. In fact, some of Ms. Alcott's comments on women would probably give today's feminists heartburn over their politically incorrect nature. Consider, for example, the following passage from [*Little Women*](#) in which Marmee discusses life goals with her daughters, Meg and Jo:

"I want my daughters to be beautiful, accomplished, and good. To be admired, loved, and respected. To have a happy youth, to be well and wisely married, and to lead useful, pleasant lives, with as little care and sorrow to try them as God sees fit to send. To be loved and chosen by a good man is the best and sweetest thing which can happen to a woman, and I sincerely hope my girls may know this beautiful experience. It is natural to think of it, Meg, right to hope and wait for it, and wise to prepare for it, so that when the happy time comes, you may feel ready for the duties and worthy of the joy. My dear girls, I am ambitious for you, but not to have you make a dash in the world, marry rich men merely because they are rich, or have splendid houses, which are not homes because love is wanting. Money is a needful and precious thing, and when well used, a noble thing, but I never want you to think it is the first or only prize to strive for. I'd rather see you poor men's wives, if you were happy, beloved,

contented, than queens on thrones, without self-respect and peace."

Such views are quite astonishing today. Rarely will you hear parents or advisors instructing young women that marriage and family are worthy life goals.

Instead, many young women are told to "go for the gold," "break through the glass ceiling," and put their professional ambitions first, only considering marriage and family if they conveniently fit within those personal plans. As a result, many young women feel [unprepared and overcommitted](#) when they finally do marry and start a family.

Alcott's words on the worthy goals of marriage and family are nearly 150 years old, and in the eyes of many, would seem to be old-fashioned and ill-advised. But have we been the ones who are ill-advised in ignoring her advice? Have we done ourselves a disservice in encouraging young people to pursue marriage and family as an afterthought?

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