

Raising Girls to Be Real Women

I recently wrote an article providing some forgotten tips on how to [raise boys to be real men](#). But boys aren't the only sex that we need help raising. Boys are getting sucked into the feminist vortex of our culture, but that vortex also is swallowing girls at perhaps an even greater frequency.

So how do we raise our girls to be real women, the kind who are loving, gentle, and kind, instead of brazen, brash, and self-centered?

For some insight, I turned to one of the most famous mothers in all of literature: Marmee March from Louisa May Alcott's [Little Women](#). In a conversation with her two oldest daughters, Meg and Jo, Marmee lays out her plan for raising and launching her daughters into the world—a plan that's a far cry from the feminist one we commonly hear today.

Take Care of the External

Marmee's first advice revolves around external qualities, as she declares she wants her daughters to be beautiful and accomplished. These are both traits that our current society emphasizes greatly, encouraging cosmetic surgeries so girls can imitate the airbrushed models who appear on social media, or exhorting girls to get out there and break glass ceilings and outdo the men in education and achievements.

But given other clues in "Little Women," I would wager that the beauty Marmee would have us instill in today's girls is the beauty of true femininity. She would have us train our girls to dress modestly but not in a frumpy fashion, to put on a skirt or dress that is "tight enough to show you're a woman and loose enough to show you're a lady," as Academy Award-

winning costume designer Edith Head once said.

Marmee would also have us teach our girls to polish their talents—not so that they can lord them over men, but so that they can use them to help and support those around them.

Cultivate Internal Character

Marmee moves from external characteristics to internal character, mentioning that she wants her daughters to be good and respected, to be “happy, beloved, contented,” and to avoid being “without self-respect and peace.”

Marmee knows that building character takes time, and that parents themselves need to start early to model good character and work on fighting their own flaws—in Marmee’s case, her quick temper—if they want to ensure that their daughters live good and respectable lives.

Teaching our girls to be happy and contented means not spoiling them with material goods or giving in to every demand, but rather teaching them to be grateful for what they do have.

Steer Them Away From Materialism

In conjunction with being grateful, Marmee also teaches her girls not to be materially minded, exhorting them not to marry for money or seek to land a splendid house.

Marrying for money isn’t as much of a temptation in our day as it might have been in the 1800s, but chasing after material things is the same. Whether married or single, women are constantly told they must have it all: a good job, nice house, fancy car, and regular vacations to exotic places. If we want our daughters to be real women, then we must teach them what Marmee teaches her girls:

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.

Pursue Good Family Relationships

While Marmee doesn't want her girls to pursue excessive amounts of money, she does want them to pursue good relationships, particularly within the family.

"Mother is always ready to be your confidant, Father to be your friend," she tells Meg and Jo, exhorting them to make their childhood home happy before they leave it for homes of their own someday.

Our daughters would benefit from a similar lesson. Today's world often encourages them to make friends with and confide in anyone other than their parents. But building good relationships with Dad and Mom provides them with wise confidants and a support structure for the future, whether that future involves college, a career, or raising a family of their own.

Teach Them to Be Marriage-Minded

The most prominent message Marmee gives her girls revolves around marriage. She notes her desire that her daughters "be well and wisely married" and encourages them to hope for and prepare themselves for such a position.

"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," she says.

Even non-feminists may feel a scream rising in the throat at that declaration, for the idea that girls should just settle down and get married, even forgoing college and career, has

become anathema in our day. But Marmee puts her finger on the very thing that has caused men to wonder where all the real women are: Namely, many contemporary women aren't marriage-minded.

Raising a marriage-minded woman is a challenging task, but one of the most effective ways to do so is for parents to model a good marriage for their daughter. Teach her to love children and to respect men, instead of bashing both groups and continually railing about all the problems each brings to women.

And finally, make sure she doesn't view marriage with rose-colored glasses, but that she views it as a worthy calling. It's hard work and takes a lot of loving sacrifice, but, as Marmee says, it's a beautiful experience worth hoping for.

We live in a world far more chaotic and upside down than the one in which Marmee and her girls live. As society crumbles, it won't be the materialistic girl who has her career and coffee order all figured out who will know how to respond when the crash comes. Instead, it will be the one with internal character, the one who has a love and interest in the most basic building block of society—the family—who will know how to begin rebuilding society gently and faithfully.

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