

Mothers: Raising One of the Few Hopes We Have for the Future

When asked for some of my favorite books over the years, one of the titles I regularly recommend is [*Mother*](#), written by Kathleen Norris in 1911.

Although somewhat obscure and rather old, I love suggesting this book because its subtle message is extremely prescient for our time, and one that I believe gets to the heart of the problem in our confused and chaotic society.

The storyline tells of Margaret, the oldest daughter in a large family, who grows tired of her family and small town, and heads to the city to work for a rich, successful woman. Margaret's diligence and character enable her own success in this world, and soon she finds herself trying to hide the identity of her large, country family, and instead present the cool persona of a professional career girl.

Her attitude changes, however, when a city friend of hers visits her family and points out that the lovely person she has become is directly because of her mother and the sacrifice she made for her children, a direct contrast to many other women in the world:

[I]n these days, when women just serenely ignore the question of children, or at most, as a special concession, bring up one or two,—just the one or two whose expenses can be comfortably met!—there's something magnificent in a woman like your mother, who begins eight destinies instead of one! She doesn't strain and chafe to express herself through the medium of poetry or music or the stage, but she puts her whole splendid philosophy into her nursery—launches sound little bodies and minds that have their first growth cleanly

and purely about her knees. Responsibility,—that's what these other women say they are afraid of! But it seems to me there's no responsibility like that of decreeing that young lives simply shall not be. Why, what good is learning, or elegance of manner, or painfully acquired fineness of speech, and taste and point of view, if you are not going to distil it into the growing plants, the only real hope we have in the world!

So many women have this same mentality today. They think they can make more of an impact on the world by breaking glass ceilings in the business world, so they have one or two children—the bare minimum so as not to interfere with their personal career plans—or perhaps none at all.

But as Margaret's friend explains in the passage above, such a mentality is simply not true. The mothers who pour themselves out for their children, welcoming and embracing them, training and educating them, nurturing and sacrificing for them, are the ones who make the real and biggest impact on the world.

In an age where children are even more rejected than they were when Kathleen Norris wrote this little novel in 1911, let's revive this message. Let's encourage young women to love children and choose them over career. Let's encourage young men to allow their wives or future wives to do this, even if it means doing with fewer material goods in life. And let's encourage existing mothers as they go through the daily grind, rather than lecturing them on how many children they have or asking when they're going to get a real job. Because it's those women who are raising one of the few hopes we have for the future.

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