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It starts with love

Special Mother's Day Issue





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While selecting quotes for *That Wonderful Thing Called Mother* (page 5), I came across one from Pam Brown that I instantly knew belonged on this page instead. “You never realize how much your mother loves you till you explore the attic and find every letter you ever sent her, every finger painting, clay pot, bead necklace, Easter chicken, cardboard Santa Claus, paper-lace Mother’s Day card, and school report since day one.”

That’s my own dear mom to a T! She still has enough of my grade school art to fill the Louvre and enough of the other stuff to keep the entire staff of the Smithsonian Institute busy cataloging for a long, long time. All I could show you from my childhood is a few small scars, but she has carefully preserved something from practically every day. Most of it is now rather embarrassing to me, but still priceless to her. Mom’s advancing in years and is now legally blind, so she can’t actually see any of it, but there it all sits—boxes and boxes and boxes of it! *If Keith doesn’t want any of these treasures, she reasons, surely his children or grandchildren will.* When she moved houses a few years ago, you can’t imagine how relieved I was that one of my strong young sons was there to do the heavy lifting instead of me.

The school reports? None were very impressive, but Mom always found something to praise. And she was like that about everything. No matter how many times I was ready to give up on myself, she never did. Her unswerving love and faith were the making of me. So to begin this special Mother’s Day issue, I’d like to say with George Washington, Marc Chagall, Stevie Wonder, and Ganeshan Venkatarman (all of whom are quoted in *That Wonderful Thing Called Mother*), and countless others from every nation and generation, “Thanks, Mom! I love you too!”

Keith Phillips

FOR THE ACTIVATED FAMILY

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unconstrained motherly love

BY ANA ALCASAS

IT WAS AN UNSEASONABLY HOT, humid June day on the East Coast of the United States. Summer had enfolded us in her sticky arms, and the kids at Calvert Country School had decided that the most appropriate activity of the day was cooling off in the lawn sprinkler system.

Three friends and I, all part of the Family International, had been invited to this school for mentally and physically challenged children to participate in their annual graduation barbeque. We dressed up as clowns and spent the afternoon mingling, laughing, chatting, passing out balloon sculptures, and painting faces.

A highlight of my day was meeting five-year-old Melissa and her mother, Shirley. Alma, one of our expert face painters, was giving Melissa an orange-and-black tiger face, while Shirley sat on a chair behind her and gently held her arms to keep her from squirming. Melissa, a lovely little dark-haired autistic girl, always seemed to be looking off to the distance with a blank expression—always, that is, except when she turned to look up into her mother’s face.

“Pretty girl!” her mother repeatedly cooed when Melissa looked up at her for reassurance, and Melissa soaked up the love and approval with expressions of total joy. The tenderness and total acceptance that Melissa’s mother communicated to her daughter had my eyes misting up. Here I had come as a volunteer to give encouragement, smiles, and approval to each child I interacted with, and I found myself unexpectedly moved by this beautiful example of motherly love.

I saw other beautiful mother-child relationships during my afternoon at Calvert Country School, and was touched by the selflessness and unconditional love that seemed so much a part of each of the parents and counselors there. The experience left me with a renewed desire to communicate that unconstrained motherly love to my own young son each and every day.

God gives us a chance to feel His love in a very special way through our mothers. Happy Mother’s Day! ■

(ANA ALCASAS IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE U.S.)



Family volunteers Veronica Love, Keith Kleinfelter, and Ana Alcasas arrive at the scene of this happening

Everybody knows that a good mother gives her children a feeling of trust and stability. She is their earth. She is the one they can count on for the things that matter most of all. She is their food and their bed and the extra blanket when it grows cold in the night; she is their warmth and their health and their shelter; she is the one they want to be near when they cry. She is the only person in the whole world in a whole lifetime who can be these things to her children. There is no substitute for her. Somehow even her clothes feel different to her children’s hands from anybody else’s clothes. Only to touch her skirt or her sleeve makes a troubled child feel better.

—KATHARINE BUTLER HATHAWAY

beautiful motherhood

By SASKIA SMITH

TO CHILDREN, no one in the whole world is more beautiful than their own loving mothers. Young children don't think of their mothers in terms of fashion sense, great taste in jewelry, or perfect hair and nails. They also don't notice stretch marks or gray hairs. Their little minds are oblivious to those things that tend to skew adults' perceptions and expectations regarding beauty, so they're actually better judges of what makes a woman truly beautiful.

Where do children find beauty?—In the eyes that convey pride in their achievements, in the lips that encourage and instruct, in the kisses that make small hurts bearable, in the soothing voice that puts them back to sleep after a bad dream, in the wrap-around love of a soft warm hug.

Where does such beauty come from?—With motherhood comes self-sacrifice, but from self-sacrifice comes humility, from humility comes grace, and from grace comes true beauty. A mother embodies life, love, and purity in the giving of herself to her children, and in these she is a reflection of God's love for His children. This is why I believe that nothing makes a woman more beautiful than motherhood. ■

(SASKIA SMITH IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN TAIWAN.)

Saskia
with her
beautiful
daughter



Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.

Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her. Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.

— PROVERBS 31:10,25-26,28,30

that wonderful thing called mother

A mother is a person who, seeing there are only four pieces of pie for five people, promptly announces she never did care for pie.

—TENNEVA JORDAN

The best medicine in the world is a mother's kiss.

—ANONYMOUS

Mama was my greatest teacher—a teacher of compassion, love, and fearlessness. If love is sweet as a flower, then my mother is that sweet flower of love.

—STEVIE WONDER

To a child's ear, "mother" is magic in any language.

—ARLENE BENEDICT

Youth fades, love droops, the leaves of friendship fall; a mother's secret hope outlives them all.

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

A mother is the truest friend we have when trials, heavy and sudden, fall upon us; when adversity takes the place of prosperity; when friends who rejoice with us in our sunshine, desert us when troubles thicken around us, still will she cling to us, and endeavor by her kind precepts and counsels to dissipate the clouds of darkness, and cause peace to return to our hearts.

—WASHINGTON IRVING

God sees us through our mothers' eyes and rewards us for our virtues.

—GANESHAN VENKATARMAN

Mother is the bank where we deposit all our hurts and worries.

—UNKNOWN

My mother's love for me was so great I have worked hard to justify it.

—MARC CHAGALL

No influence is so powerful as that of the mother.

—SARAH JOSEPHA HALE

The strength of motherhood is greater than natural laws.

—BARBARA KINGSOLVER

Mothers are instinctive philosophers.

—HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

A good mother is worth hundreds of schoolmasters.

—GEORGE HERBERT

The mother's heart is the child's schoolroom.

—HENRY WARD BEECHER

Mother-love is the fuel that enables a normal human being to do the impossible.

—UNKNOWN

A mother loves her children even when they least deserve to be loved.

—KATE SAMPERI

Mother is the one we count on for the things that matter most of all.

—KATHARINE BUTLER HATHAWAY

A mother understands what a child does not say.

—JEWISH PROVERB

All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual, and physical education I received from her.

—GEORGE WASHINGTON

The noblest calling in the world is that of a mother. True motherhood is the most beautiful of all arts, the greatest of all professions. She who can paint a masterpiece or write a book that will influence millions deserves the plaudits and admiration of mankind, but she who rears successfully a family of healthy, beautiful sons and daughters whose immortal souls will be exerting an influence throughout the ages, long after paintings shall have faded and books and statues shall have been destroyed, deserves the highest honor that man can give.

—DAVID O. MCKAY



BY DAN JOHNSTON

gifts to last a lifetime

THE GREATEST GIFTS MY MOTHER EVER GAVE ME WERE THE GIFTS OF COURAGE AND FAITH.

Some parents teach their children courage, determination, or any of a number of other virtues by reading to them of the great deeds done by great men and women of the past, in the hope that it will motivate them to find such things on their own.

But not my mother.

It is said that an example speaks louder than a sermon and that a picture is worth a thousand words—and it's true. Of the "pictures" I have from my childhood, many amaze me when I think back on them. As a single mom of three children doing full-time Christian volunteer work, how did my mom manage to not only raise us, but to do so as we traveled all across the U.S. and to foreign lands?

Like the time our car broke down in the Bighorn Mountains. With no one in sight for miles and an unexpected snow storm settling in, she must have been pretty desperate.

**SHE HAD
THE FAITH TO
BELIEVE AND
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TO ACT ON
THAT BELIEF.**

Yet what I remember most from that situation is her faith that the Lord would bring us through. And He did.

Where did she find the courage to move our family across the Pacific to Communist China in obedience to the call she received from God?

And there was the day my older brother Joe got separated from us on a Hong Kong subway. We had only been in the city for two days, and it seemed there was no way he could find his way back to where we were staying. How did Mom manage to not get hysterical? Her prayers and faith paid off; Joe made it home before we did.

Mom knew that it would be difficult at best, and yet she chose to leave her comfortable home for a country she knew little about, with her kids in tow, simply because God told her to share His love with the people there. She had the faith to believe and the courage to act on that belief.

As a young adult and Christian volunteer in Central America, I now face many problems of my own every day. Some are bigger than others, of course, but every time I run into a situation that seems utterly impossible, I remember those moments from my childhood where my mother's faith and courage shone brightest, and that puts things into perspective. A verse in the Bible says, "With God nothing shall be impossible," and that sums up the most vivid lesson from my childhood—thanks to my mother, who taught through her example. ■

(DAN JOHNSTON IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN GUATEMALA.)



interview with *Mom*

MOTHERS GIVE SO MUCH. Their entire lives are a gift of love to their families. We journey far from our beginnings, and then something tugs at our heartstrings and draws us home to rediscover who we are and where we came from.

I sat down with my mother a few months before she passed away and asked her some questions about her life. If you haven't ever done that, I suggest you do. It's sure to help you appreciate your mother even more.

Mom told me much about her life and dreams, both fulfilled and unfulfilled.

"Do you have any regrets?" I asked her. "What would you major on if you could live your life again?"

She answered by showing me something she had written in her journal: If I could, I would find more country lanes to walk, bake more cookies, plant more spring bulbs, swim at dusk, walk in the rain, dance under the stars, walk the Great Wall, wade along sandy shores, pick up sea shells and glass, glide through fjords in northern lands, sing country ballads, read more books, erase dismal thoughts, dream up a fantasy.

"Is there any message that you would like to pass on to your children and grandchildren?" was my next question.

Again she flipped through her journal and found the answer already written there: Stop waiting to live until your car is paid off, until you get a new home, until your kids are grown, until you can go back to school, until you finish this or that, until you lose ten pounds.

Flipping a few more pages she came to this entry: Pray for what you wish. God loves to answer because answered prayer deepens faith and adds glory to His name.

And again: Savor the moment. Savor your walking and talking with friends, the smiles of little children. Savor the dazzling light of morning that holds the multicolored way. Savor God's great earth, rolling hills, the birds, the blooms, the diamond dewdrops glittering on a crab apple tree—all His wonders from His hand.

When I asked how she managed to stay so upbeat even though her health was failing, she turned to this one: What special poet makes your heart ring? Who shines a light on the dark corners of despair, easing the ache, chasing out care? Who makes your feet to dance and your hands to clap? When you have found this one, you will have found a treasure.

As for me, I found my special poet a few months later when I read this, Mom's farewell poem:

My love to souls whom I have known,
With thanks for tender mercies shown
That kindled hope at winter's door
And sprinkled petals on the floor
To soften summer's way.
Be not dismayed nor weep for me,
For I am now forever free
From body's confines, toil and pain.
Now let me soar to Heaven's plane
And there with angels play. ■

(CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE MIDDLE EAST.)



qualities of a good marriage

By MARIA FONTAINE



SO MUCH HAS BEEN SAID AND WRITTEN ABOUT MARRIAGE—much of it rather complicated or seemingly contradictory—that I was curious as to what Jesus would have to say on the subject. He has such a wonderful way of explaining things simply, clearly, and positively that I was sure He could put things in perspective. So I asked Him to summarize some of the main qualities of a good marriage, and He did. Here's the message He gave:

Marriage wasn't meant to be so complicated or difficult that only a few could do it successfully. It's within the reach of nearly everyone. It's also what will make most people happiest and their lives most meaningful, productive, and satisfying, because it's a basic part of God's plan for mankind. No one excels in all of the following areas, of course, so don't be discouraged if you feel you fall short in some. Just do your best and ask Me to help you with the rest.

Putting Me first. It's a spiritual law that when you put your time with Me first, both alone and with your husband or wife, everything else falls into place. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these [other] things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

Unselfishness. Selfishness is at the root of most marriage problems. For a marriage to work, both partners need to put the happiness

of the other before their own. That's real love—the kind that lasts.

Willingness to recognize and work on problems. Most of the problems that sink marriages start small but grow out of hand because the couple fails to deal with the problems soon enough. Often they tell themselves that the problem will go away if they ignore it or when circumstances change, but that passive approach seldom works. Those with the strongest marriages are those who learn to face their problems head-on and take active steps to overcome them together.

Good communication. In order to understand and meet each other's needs, as well as to unite to overcome problems, good communication is a must.

Forgiveness. A readiness to forgive is a key to a solid, secure marriage. Be quick to apologize for any hurtful words or actions you may have directed at your wife or husband.

Being supportive. To make your marriage all it can be, dwell on each other's good qualities and always look for ways to bring out the best in each other, rather than belittle, criticize, or nag.

Teamwork. Discuss and agree on goals and priorities, and learn to tackle problems together. "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion" (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10).



Consideration. Being considerate of each other's feelings, likes and dislikes, time, and energy not only says "I love you" in a most convincing and endearing way, but it also relieves stress, prevents friction, and keeps lots of little problems from ever happening.

Affection. You'd be surprised at how many marriages fall short because of a lack of outward affection. Vocal expressions of your love for one another are also important, but sometimes touching, kissing, and hugging can convey love and reassurance even better. They are physical manifestations of inward feelings.

Equality. Equality means involving each other in decisions, parenting your children together, and sharing financial and household responsibilities, but it goes deeper than that. It's not just a matter of scheduling or dividing the workload equally, but of valuing and respecting each other so each one's strengths can come to the fore.

Admiration. Few things boost self-esteem or make people want to succeed in the truly important things of life more than hearing that their good qualities are noticed and admired. Sharpen your appreciation of the wonderful person you married, and watch him or her become even more wonderful.

Reaching out to others. Even if you seem to be the most compatible couple in the world

and feel completely satisfied and secure in each other's company, in order for your marriage to thrive, you both need other friends. Others can help you grow in ways that your husband or wife can't, so your marriage will actually be strengthened as you each spend time and do things with others.

A sense of humor. "A merry heart does good, like medicine" (Proverbs 17:22). Lighten up a little and you'll find that most of the everyday inconveniences, annoyances, and problems you face aren't so bad after all.

Optimism. Optimism—the tendency to believe and expect the best—linked to faith in Me nearly always pays off big, because I love to reward faith. Conversely, few things can drag down a marriage faster than pessimism—expecting the worst and complaining about the downside of situations.

Including Me. I want to see you succeed in marriage and as individuals, and I'm the Answer Man. I can make mountains of problems melt away, and I can make your dreams come true, but there's one condition: Include Me. You'll be amazed at what the three of us can accomplish together! ■

(MARIA FONTAINE IS CO-LEADER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, ALONG WITH HER HUSBAND, PETER AMSTERDAM.)

“Isn't It Wonderful...?”



BY RACHEL AIRD

Rachel Aird with her literacy class of disadvantaged adults in a squatter camp in Johannesburg, South Africa



AN ONE PERSON REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE? One “ordinary” middle-aged woman made a difference in my life.

I was a good girl, and everybody said so. I was the head girl of my grammar school in England, with top marks in all my exams. I won a coveted university scholarship that included trips abroad. I volunteered every week at a children’s home and worked with severely mentally challenged children in my spare time. I was dedicating my life to helping others through clinical psychology. I had been a Sunday school teacher for years, and didn’t drink, smoke, or take drugs. What could possibly be missing? One person saw it almost immediately.

At a psychiatric hospital where I was working during my university holidays gaining direct experience with patients, I met a handsome young male nurse

named Martin. We began going out together, and he eventually took me home to meet his mother. Grace was a small, rather frail woman, but very straightforward in her questions. “Are you a Christian?” she asked, catching me off guard.

“But of course,” I replied. After all, I thought, wasn’t everyone in England a Christian?

“Isn’t it wonderful to love Jesus?” she asked next. I was stumped. I had never thought of loving Jesus. That sounded far too personal. Respecting Him, yes. Talking to Him in a rather distant manner, yes. Attempting to keep the Ten Commandments, yes. But loving Him? I excused myself and set off on a walk alone.

As I strolled through the outskirts of town, I couldn’t get that thought out of my head. Isn’t it wonderful to love Jesus? Why did I need that kind of a relationship with Jesus? After all, I was very good on my own.

Then I heard a strange voice in my head that could only have been God’s, considering what He said. *What about My Son, Jesus?*

“Well, I don’t really need Him to be good,” I replied.

Apparently that wasn’t the right answer because He asked again, *What*

**ONE
“ORDINARY”
MIDDLE-
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IN MY LIFE.**

about My Son, Jesus? I couldn't shake that voice!

I continued to walk until I came to some fields. There in the middle of one field, I heard the voice again. *Look at this field. It's fertile and even ploughed, but nothing is growing. Now look at the field next to it. It is full of beautiful cabbages. That could be you if you will just give your heart to Me.*

It was then that I realized that I did need Jesus. I knelt there in the freshly turned dirt and opened my heart to Jesus, and my life took an unexpected and wonderful turn from that moment on.

Some 30 years later, on the way to Grace's funeral, I passed those same cabbage fields. This time both of them were lush and green, almost ready for harvesting, and I thought about how wonderfully God had fulfilled His promise to make my life fruitful, like that once empty field. As I always do when I count my blessings, I started with my 12 children and 9 grandchildren—Grace's grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Yes, Martin and I got married, and by this time we'd been full-time Christian volunteers in many countries for over 30 years. As I looked out of the car window at those cabbages, I smiled through tears of gratitude and thanked God again for Grace—Grace who had helped me learn to love Jesus.

Grace had lived a happy but simple life. She had never been rich or famous, and she had never traveled very far from her hometown except in her prayers. But like someone has said, "A life need not be great to be beautiful. A beautiful life is one that does what God made it to do." That was Grace!

She had also left some rather unusual instructions for her funeral. For music she wanted the '60s song "Spirit in the Sky," because she had loved to dance to it. It's a happy, full-of-life song, and that's how she wanted to be

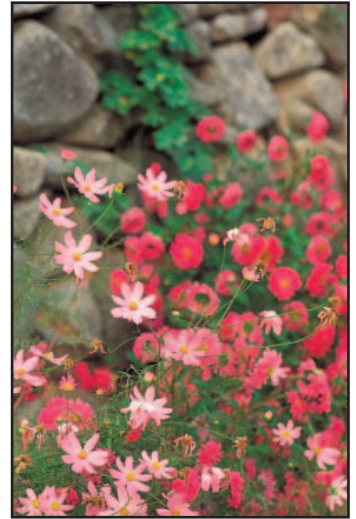
remembered. Her second request was that everyone attending her funeral wear something red, her favorite color.

As Martin and I entered the church where her funeral service was about to begin, I wondered if people would remember or had even heard about that second request. Tears welled up again as I looked around at all the people who had come to thank God for Grace—over three hundred people, all wearing something red and all having been touched in some way by her passionate love for Jesus.

After the service, people came to us with their stories: "She visited me in the hospital every day while I was sick." "She would listen to all my problems and pray for me, no matter what time of the night I phoned." "She told me about Jesus." It went on and on—hundreds of lives touched and quietly changed by this one little woman.

That day, instead of a doleful funeral, we celebrated Grace's earthly life and rejoiced with her over the thrilling eternal life she had just begun. Now she knows how truly wonderful it is to love Jesus, because she's experiencing it to the full. ■

(RACHEL AIRD IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN SOUTH AFRICA.)



If you haven't yet discovered how wonderful it is to love Jesus, you can right now by praying the following prayer.

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Your life for me. Please forgive me for the wrong things I've done. Come into my heart, and give me Your gift of eternal life. Teach me more about Your love, and fill me with Your joy. Amen.

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Q: Lately my children have become quite disrespectful. It also seems that whenever I try to correct the situation, I only make matters worse. What can I do?

A: The first step in correcting such misbehavior is facing the hard truth that it's partly your fault that your children got into that state. As with most problems, you need to start by examining your own attitudes and actions and determining to make whatever changes you need to make first, before you can expect to help others change.

Though children will naturally become more questioning and challenging as they grow older and need more explanations, outright disrespect and disobedience is usually the result of being too lenient, because leniency teaches children to manipulate rather than respect their parents. The solution is to learn to be firmer, but making such a change is usually easier said than done, because the unacceptable behavior has become a bad habit and because you probably felt at the time that your motives—love for your children and wanting to see them happy—were good.

Those are good motives, but if the results are bad, it's the wrong form of love for that situation. Firmness is also

a form of love, and sometimes it's the best form. Children usually think in terms of what will make them happiest in the short term, so their parents need to take the responsibility of judging what will be best for them in the long run, which often means saying no.

Next you need to have the issues clearly sorted out in your own mind. Exactly what constitutes acceptable behavior and what doesn't? Before you can hope to convince your children that certain changes are needed, you need to be fully convinced yourself.

If you aren't sure what to do in a particular situation, pray and ask Jesus to show you. Or if you aren't sure what general approach is best for each of your children, ask Him to reveal that to you. Or if you feel rules that are needed are going to be difficult for you to enforce, ask Him to strengthen your conviction. Whatever your question or need, He's ready, willing, and able to help you. He loves your children even more than you do, so you can be sure that He's going to do everything He can to help you become the best parent you can be.

In implementing the rules you feel are needed, you'll get a lot further by discussing them with your children and rea-

soning with them, trying to win their cooperation, than you would by merely laying down the law and demanding their respect. Your discussing it—which includes hearing them out and being willing to show yourself flexible and make modifications if needed—conveys your respect for them. Most likely, they will respect you back, and that is the first step in the right direction.

How you explain things will depend on your children’s ages and levels of maturity. Again, there’s no substitute for asking the Lord for His counsel, because what could help one child may not work with another.

Begin by taking your share of the blame and explaining why the change is needed. “Because I didn’t put a stop to it from the beginning, you’ve gotten in the habit of talking back and being disrespectful. That needs to change, because it’s not acceptable behavior in a loving household, which ours should be.”

Be sure to make not only the rules clear, but also the consequences for breaking them. “If you talk back or are disrespectful, you’ll have such-and-such privileges suspended.” Be sure to enforce the consequences consistently, or your rules will become of no effect.

Along with the promised punishment, you should also promise rewards for good behavior. “As soon as you correct the problem, we’ll be able to reinstate the suspended privileges and possibly add some more.” End your discussion on a positive note.

Lastly, pray for patience. Remember, you’re trying to do more than change behavior; you’re trying to change the attitudes that have led to that bad behavior and build positive new habits to replace their old ones. That takes time. Prayer, consistency, and firmness, tempered with love, are the keys. So commit to making the change together, and keep at it until it happens! ■

FEEDING READING

Motherhood as God sees it

God’s idea of a virtuous woman is also His idea of a good mother.

Proverbs 11:16
Proverbs 12:4
Proverbs 19:14b
Proverbs 31:10-31

A godly mother shines in the home and with her children.

Proverbs 14:1a
Proverbs 31:27
1 Timothy 3:11

A godly mother brings love and harmony to the home.

1 Corinthians 16:14
Colossians 2:2
Titus 2:4
1 Peter 4:8

A good mother applies discipline when needed and isn’t overindulgent.

Proverbs 19:18
Proverbs 22:15
Proverbs 29:15b

A good mother imparts godly values to her children through God’s Word.

Deuteronomy 6:7
Deuteronomy 31:12-13
Proverbs 22:6a
John 21:15b

Examples of motherly love:

Hagar with Ishmael:
Genesis 21:15-16
Moses’ parents:
Exodus 1:22; 2:1-2; Hebrews 11:23
Hannah with Samuel:
1 Samuel 1:22-28
King Solomon and the two mothers:
1 Kings 3:23-27
The Shunammite woman and Elisha:
2 Kings 4:17-20,27
The Canaanite woman pleads with Jesus to heal her son:
Matthew 15:22-28
Mary at the cross of Jesus:
John 19:17,18,25

THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE RULES THE WORLD

What an important job a mother has! The mothers of the next generation are the ones who are molding the future. Motherhood is just about the greatest calling in the world. Of course, taking care of a baby may not always seem very important, but don’t ever minimize it. Who knows what an impact that child may have on the lives of many others one day.

Motherhood takes the strength of Samson, the wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job, the faith of Abraham, the insight of Daniel, and the courage and administrative ability of David. It also takes the love of God, that’s for sure! What a job!

The thing that makes a mother so wonderful is her self-sacrificial spirit that is willing to sacrifice her time and strength and even her own health, if necessary, for the sake of that child. Any woman can have a baby, but it takes a real mother to learn how to “train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6).

—DAVID BRANDT BERG

The secret to raising happy, well-behaved, and well-adjusted children is actually quite simple—love. It's knowing how to apply that love that isn't always so straightforward or easy. Here are ten tips that are sure to help.

Ten Keys to Successful Parenting

1

Lead your children to receive Jesus.

There will be times when the natural love God has given you for your children won't be enough to satisfy your child's needs. Your children need their own connection with the source of all love, God Himself, and they make that connection by receiving Jesus.

Connecting with Jesus is so simple that even two-year-olds can do it. All you need to do is explain to your children that if they will ask Jesus to come into their hearts, He will be their best Friend, forgive them for having been bad sometimes, and help them to be good. Then lead them in a prayer like this one: "Dear Jesus, forgive me for sometimes being bad. Please come into my heart and be my best Friend forever. Amen."

2

Give your children God's Word.

What could help your children more than teaching them to find faith, inspiration, guidance, and answers to their questions and problems in the Word? "Faith comes by hearing the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). Daily time in the Word is the key to spiritual progress, and that's true at any age.

If your children are quite young, you can start by reading to them from a children's Bible or Bible storybooks, or by watching Bible-based videos with them, explaining things when needed. Be consistent and make it fun, and your children will soon be "built up in [Jesus] and established in the faith" (Colossians 2:7). Then they will be less likely to be led astray by ungodly influences or search elsewhere for answers, because their lives will be built on the rock-solid foundation of God's Word.

3

Teach your children to be

motivated by love.

God wants us all to do what's right, not out of fear of punishment but because we love Him and others and therefore want to do what's right. If you've led your children to receive Jesus and taught them to love and respect both Him and others, they will develop that right, loving motivation over time if given enough positive reinforcement.

You can teach your children from a very early age to put love into action by being unselfish and considerate of others' feelings and needs. Jesus summed it up in Matthew 7:12, in what is now known as the Golden Rule. The following paraphrase makes a great starting place in teaching little ones to be motivated by love: "Treat others the way you would like to be treated."

4

Promote honest, open communication.

If your children know that they can expect you to react calmly and lovingly no matter what, they will be much more likely to confide in you. And if you build a relationship of mutual trust and understanding while your children are small, they will be more likely to keep that line of communication open when they reach their preteen and teen years and their emotions and problems become much more complex.



Put yourself in your children's place.

5

Try to relate to your children on their level and not expect too much of them. Also remember that children tend to be more sensitive than adults, so it's important to be extra considerate of their feelings. We all know how demoralizing it is to be embarrassed, hurt, or slighted by others, so realizing that such unpleasant experiences can be even more traumatic to children should cause us to do our best to spare them from such incidents.

Set a good example.

6

Be the best role model that you can be—not by trying to appear perfect in your children's eyes, but by being loving, accepting, patient, and forgiving, and by striving to demonstrate the other virtues and live the values you want your children to have.

Set reasonable rules for behavior.

7

Children are happiest when they know their boundaries and those boundaries are lovingly and consistently enforced. A spoiled, demanding, and irresponsible child becomes a spoiled, demanding, and irresponsible adult, so it's important that children learn to take responsibility for their actions. The goal of discipline is self-discipline, without which your children will be at a great disadvantage later in school, business, and the social world.

One of the best methods of establishing the rules is to get your children to help make them,

or at least to agree to them. It takes more time and patience to teach them to make the right decisions than it does to punish them for their wrong ones, but it goes a lot further.

Give praise and encouragement.

8

Like the rest of us, children thrive on praise and appreciation. Build their self-esteem by consistently and sincerely commending them for their good qualities and achievements. Also remember that it's more important and bears far better results to praise children for good behavior than to scold them for bad behavior. Try to always accentuate the positive and your children will feel more loved and secure.

Love unconditionally.

9

God never gives up on us or stops loving us no matter how far we've strayed, and that's the way He wants us to be with our children.

Pray for your children.

10

No matter how hard you try or how well you do at everything else, some situations will be beyond your control or require more than you have to give—but nothing is beyond God's control or His power. Tap into His limitless resources through prayer. He has all the answers and can supply every need. "Ask and it shall be given" (Matthew 7:7). "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17).

Happy parenting! ■



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Thank you, mothers!

A mother's love is one of the best examples of My love for My children, because a godly mother loves unconditionally, continually, and despite the circumstances. It is a special love that I place in each mother's heart because I knew that through the love that mothers have for their children, all of you would better understand My love.

You may feel incapable in your task as a mother. You see your faults and know that you aren't perfect. But, oh, there is so much beauty surrounding a mother! You mothers resemble Me in the way you unselfishly give, sometimes without seeming to receive much in return, and in the way you pray for your children and support their dreams.

I knew when I gave you children that there would be times of disappointment, desperation, and heartbreak, but I also knew that there would be times of great joy and love beyond measure, and that in your children you would find much of the meaning to your life.

Being a mother requires a lot, but it also has its rewards—the joy of holding a newborn, the smile of a little child, the happy moments shared as a family, the appreciation and respect shown by your grown child, and the love exchanged all along the way. These and many more are My blessings for all that you give up to be a mother. And one day here in Heaven you will receive the ultimate reward for all that you have given. It will be the greatest family reunion ever, untarnished by tears or earthly limitations, where unveiled love will envelop you. In that moment you will experience the rewards of motherhood to the full.