

A MOTHER'S LEGACY

2020

“What kind of a legacy will I be leaving for my children?” That certainly would not have been a question to ask myself when I was super busy raising my three boys. A mom needs a lot of free time on her hands to take on this kind of soul-searching. However, since this season of my life is over and I am way in my golden years, it seems that engaging in quiet introspection has become a little habit of mine. In fact, as I am writing this message, I am thinking of my own mother and the legacy she left behind.

Sadly, I was only three years old when my mother passed away from tuberculosis. Therefore, I did not have the chance to know her at all. However, I kept one memory of her which, unfortunately, is not a happy one. Being too young to understand the somber moment our family was going through at the time, I remember her dressed in a burgundy outfit and ‘sleeping’ in a large brown wooden box in my grandfather’s living room. As I paced the long hallway holding my father’s hand, I would glance at her each time I passed by the living room door.

Inevitably, as a result of her premature death at the age of thirty-four, I did not experience the early stage of a mother/child bonding that is important in the development of a well-adjusted child. There is no doubt in my mind that our maid took good care of me and my siblings during mom’s sickness. However, in my opinion (and of many child experts), no one can replace the care given from a mother to her children at birth and throughout their childhood. Therefore, can I speculate that my irrational behavior as a little girl was a result for the lack of it?

I remember one day as I was sitting at my aunt’s feet and holding a pair of scissors in my hand, I asked her if I was afraid to cut her skirt. “Yes, of course!” she replied immediately. Well, without any hesitation, I cut about an inch of it. My aunt could not believe it! Quite a defiant and challenging little girl I had been! I certainly needed a behavioral adjustment that day. Thank God that period of my life was short lived!

As for my siblings, my younger brother was six months old at the time of mom’s death. My older brother was five years old, and old enough to have kept fond memories of her and him sitting together on the porch of our home where he learned his ABCs and numbers, or listening to her lullabies at bedtime.

Despite the fact that I did not get to know my mother, I discovered her personality through my aunts’ testimonies. According to them, she was a beautiful woman with a gentle, cheerful, energetic and delightful personality. Her great sense of humor, courage, good judgment and kindness were admired by everyone she came in contact with. My aunts also mentioned that I inherited certain traits of her charming personality. I must say, I was happy to hear these comments from them!

Unfortunately, my mother is not part of my memories, but years ago I visited the place where she was born and raised. Having set foot in her little village was certainly a memorable moment for me. I remember also my dad taking a trip in the region to visit her family. Oddly, my mom’s siblings were surprised to hear that he never remarried. “You didn’t love our sister?” they asked. What an interesting perspective on love and marriage. In fact, no one could ever replace his wife... Dad lived many years captive by her memories, leaving no room for another woman in his heart. What a beautiful love story, you might say. True. But unfortunately, it was one with a bittersweet twist.

It left all the loved ones involved with a longing for the man they once knew...

My mom's life was cut short; so was her story. However, she still left a legacy as a mother, a wife, and a person. And now I am asking myself... "What will be mine?"

When we make the decision to start our own family, most of us do not fully realize how much our lives can change after giving birth to our first child. We may have an idea by watching other mothers, but living it is a different ball game. I heard a woman one day, who was expecting her first baby, emphatically say that her child will have to fit into HER plans, not the other way around. Now, I would be curious to find out how well that went for her...

It is not my intention here to scare the new or future moms with what I am about to say, but in reality, children change our lives; want it or not. Babies are supposed to be cute and cuddly, and they are. But they also come with sleepless nights, diaper changes, tummy aches and teething. And when we think we have it hard, then come the terrible twos, way up to puberty, followed by the teenage years with challenges of their own. We come to a point that we seem to focus more on the negative attitudes of our kids than the positive ones, especially when they push our buttons more often than not!

"Mom, what's for dinner?" I still remember this question to this day! My oldest son, a teenager back then, would get up early in the morning all perky and cheery, ready to ask me this question. He may have said a quick 'Hi, mom!' as an intro, but his question would immediately follow. It may not have been a daily habit, but it seemed like it was. I wonder to this day why he would think of dinner that early in the day... What about breakfast and lunch? I guess my son had those already covered.

I have to admit that this simple question really got to me after a while; the reason being that I couldn't think straight about anything this early in the morning. I couldn't decide what I would eat for breakfast or for lunch, much less what I would prepare for dinner for the entire family! I have to say here that I have never been a morning person nor a night owl. So, you could say that I fit right in the middle of the day which, if you count eight hours of sleep, it amounts only to a few hours of being fully awake and alert. Having said that, how I was able to raise three boys with this kind of metabolism is beyond me!

Moving on to my middle son, not to pick up after himself was what pushed my buttons. It was a constant battle with him. I didn't mind that his bedroom looked like a tornado had gone through, but the living areas were definitely off limits. If he hadn't followed the rule and wasn't around to comply with it, out of frustration I would pick up his things and throw them all on his bed. Came bedtime, he must have been a bit ticked off by his mom's drastic measures! But after a while, my son got the message.

As for my youngest son, in his early teens back then, it was quite a challenge to explain why we would not give him permission to join his skateboarding buddies at night in the shopping center's parking lot. That can get a mom lose her patience...or what was left of it at the time!

However, thank God there are always these moments that make up for everything! These special, unexpected moments when our kids show signs that we may be doing something right after all! In my case, it was a note written by one of them and left on his bed before leaving for school. It said how much he appreciated everything I was doing for him and his brothers... Or a praise that my lasagna was the best in the whole wide world from another one... Or for all of my sons to say

they have never been ashamed of their mom in front of their friends, even if she didn't speak perfect English, and with a very thick accent at that! Would you have believed your own kids if they had said that to you? Well, you may think I'm naïve, but I did!

Thank God as well for all the wonderful memories my husband and I have built with our children! While under our care, it was a time for them to discover, learn, experience new things, and make their own decisions and choices. We were always there to help, guide, and encourage them. We witnessed their struggles and their progress, their failures and victories, their tears and their joys. This is what parenthood is all about!

As parents, our primary concern was to follow God's principles, and to teach them to our children. Since He is the one who created man and woman in the first place, and then said to them..."Go and multiply the earth!", don't you think the next logical step for Him would have been to give them instructions on how to raise their offspring? Well, He did. I agree there are many self-help books on parenting out there, and I would not want to discard them all as rubbish. However, I would say that our parenting style was based on our deep and unconditional love for them, godly principles, moral values, common sense, consistency and fairness in our rules, as well as lots of prayers...

Proverbs 22:15 says..."A youngster's heart is filled with foolishness, but physical discipline will drive it far away." So yes, on rare occasions we gave our sons a little spanking when they were young. I know nowadays there are some controversies about this issue. However, we never did it out of anger, and we always explained our reasons for doing so. We always had their best interests at heart. Having said that, I admit we were not perfect parents and we also made our share of mistakes. Welcome to parenthood!

Proverbs 22:6 also says..."Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." We also hung on to that promise. We kept our focus on our ultimate goal of raising our children to become responsible and caring men which, I am happy to say, they turned out to be. We valued the concept of 'sowing and reaping', and we made every effort to sow good seeds in our children's hearts. However, we knew very well that God was the only one who could make the seeds grow, and ultimately bring forth a good harvest.

It is a known fact that a mother's job is never done, and a paycheck is not to be expected at the end of the week. There is no bonus at the end of the year, and no path on the back for a job well done. However, I can truly say that those times were the most fulfilling ones of my life. I may not be able to say this, mind you, if my husband would not have been present to assume his responsibility as a father.

It is also true that we cannot always predict how our children will turn out to be in life. However, as parents, we need to remember that our actions speak louder than our words. I also believe that deep inside each mother's heart, there is a desire to make a positive contribution to our children's lives, and each day creates new opportunities to do so. We have been given the tremendous responsibility of raising our family, and when all is said and done, what kind of a legacy will we be leaving for our children? Personally speaking, I hope it will be my unconditional love for them. And if my little idiosyncrasies are also part of it, that will be fine too!..

I believe Jesus is the perfect example of what true love really is. He came on this earth to do his Father's will. His whole life and His sacrificial death on the cross demonstrated his unselfish, unconditional love for humanity. He left us a legacy of forgiveness and salvation, kindness and

compassion, as well as humility and perfect love. It is, undoubtedly, the greatest legacy anyone has ever left or will ever leave...

In closing, let me just say to all the moms who have children at home and feel overwhelmed and unappreciated... don't give up! The time and efforts you are presently investing in your children's lives are all worthwhile. So, hang in there!

To the women who can enjoy their own mother's presence in their lives, I say... count yourselves blessed! Take every opportunity to show her your love, affection and appreciation. And if for some reason the relationship between you both is somewhat challenging, I would hope you find it within you to work at it, and turn it into a meaningful one.

For those who have been abused or abandoned in some way or another by your own mother, I would hope that you find the courage to forgive her. I realize this is one of the hardest decisions to make... But yet, as you do so, you will realize that forgiveness is really a gift you give to yourself. It will open the door for the healing process to begin.

Lastly, for the ones who have lost a child or their own mother (or maybe both), this day will probably be a difficult one for you. I pray that you will find comfort in the fond memories you have of them, and in the support from family and friends. May God bless you in a very special way.

TO ALL THE MOMS...
HAVE A WONDERFUL MOTHER'S DAY!

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