

My Mom (and how mean she was)

My mom was quite a gal. She came from a large and poor family, she had 7 sisters. My mom was the third oldest of the seven. The family had moved to Menard, Texas, when my mom was 16, my grandfather was probably going wherever he could find work as it was the middle of the Great Depression.

My dad was about 20 at the time and he grew up in Eldorado, Texas. These were all really small towns and dad and a friend went to Menard looking for girls and low and behold there was a family with 7. And as dad and his friend use to say, *"They found a whole nest of them."*

And it ended up my dad married my mom and his friend married her older sister. As the story goes, mom & dad went looking for a preacher to marry them and they found a minister out beside his church in the shade, practicing his sermon. He was outside because it was so hot and there wasn't any air conditioning in those days.

As dad use to like to say, *"He had a church wedding but not actually in the church."* Mom was 5' 4" and dad was 6' 4". Mom was a foot shorter **but she didn't know it.** You ever see one of those little dogs that don't seem to know they are little and they jump into a fight with a big dog. Well, that was my mom.

She was hopelessly old fashioned. She seemed to really take to heart the verse found in Proverbs 22:6, *"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."*

But that doesn't really explain why she was so mean to us kids.

While other kids ate anything they wanted for breakfast, I had to have oatmeal, or eggs & toast. And at school when others had pop and candy for lunch, I had to drink milk and eat a sandwich. Usually, a tuna fish sandwich, which I still love to this day.

But at least, I wasn't alone in my sufferings. My mom treated my sister and two brothers the same as she did me.

My mother insisted upon knowing where we were at all times. You'd think we were on a chain gang or something. She had to know who our friends were and where we were going. Because of her I never got to hang out with low lives and experience the thrill of being arrested.

She insisted that if we said we'd be gone an hour, that we be gone one hour or less--not one hour and ten minutes. Now I have trouble with time, I'm almost always on time or early, I can't be fashionably late like other people. Oh no, I have this problem where I would rather be a half hour early than 5 minutes late.

And talk about mean, she actually spanked us. Not once, but every time we disobeyed. **I mean, who died and made her king?** I think that belt was used more on our rear ends than it was to hold up Dad's pants. **Can you imagine someone actually spanking a child just because he disobeyed?** So I grew up respecting authority, how embarrassing.

Now, maybe, you can begin to see how mean she was.

And to add insult to injury she made a lot of our clothes herself, just to save money. While most the other kids wore regular shirts, sometimes all I had to wear was a T-shirt.

And that's not the worst of it. We had to be in bed by nine each night and up early the next morning. We couldn't sleep till noon like our friends. And to this day I consider staying in bed until 6 a.m. as sleeping in.

And my mother actually had the nerve to break the child-labor law. **She made us work.** Can you believe it? We had to wash dishes, make beds, and all sorts of cruel things. I was the oldest, my sister is 10 years younger than me, and so I even had to do the "girl" type chores like washing the dishes.

And she always insisted on us telling the truth, the whole truth and because of this none of us kids are very good liars because we didn't get any practice growing up.

Mom could be so embarrassing. I remember going into the **bank** with her when I was a teenager. She was depositing dad's check so she could pay bills. And dad was self-employed and sometimes we didn't have much money. And evidently this was one of those times.

But Mom had decided that she was going to put some in savings every time. And it embarrassed me to death when she told the teller she wanted to put 50 cents into savings.

But by her embarrassing actions she taught me a number of things. One was to be frugal and always put something aside. To have GOALS and stick to them, she modeled endurance and perseverance, that when you decided to do something good you followed through with it.

Romans 5:3-4, “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering **produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.**” We need to be shown how to persevere.

There are a lot of people who start things but lack the ability to stay to the finish. Endurance enables you to go the distance. (Building a house -- Son says he remembers me just keeping on keeping on.)

If I spent the night over at a buddy’s house, **can you imagine**, she checked to see if I was really there. I forgot to mention, my old fashioned mother refused to let me date until the age 16. Sixteen, that is, if you were going to a church function. And that was maybe twice a year.

So we missed out on a lot of socializing. And unlike some of my friends, neither my brothers or me ever got a girlfriend pregnant. Not only were there no babies born out of wedlock among all us kids, there were no pregnancies out of wedlock either.

So we missed all those great discussions about whether someone should have an abortion or not. So you can see that our mean mom really held us back in our social development.

Through the years, **things didn't improve a bit**. Our marks in school had to be up to par. I still remember my mother praising me for being able to read the labels on the canned goods when I was a little guy. She encouraged me and by the time I was in the 4th grade I could read at High School level.

Because of mom’s relentless prodding we all ended up getting good grades. She was so mean that when the schools stopped teaching phonics, even as poor as we were, mom hired a retired schoolteacher down the street to teach me phonics and how to spell. Can you believe it?

As the years rolled by we all graduated from high school of course. What with our mother talking, hitting and demanding respect, none of us were allowed the pleasure of being a dropout.

She wasn’t fair at all. When mom was a teenager it was the middle of the **great depression** and she never finished high school herself..) But yet, she made sure we did well in school and all four of her children got one or more college degrees. My brother even working on his PhD at Stanford. (She got her GED after we were grown.)

Out of four children, all of us attained a higher education. None of us have ever been arrested, divorced or beaten his mate. There has been no divorce in my family for three generations. Four if you count my grandparents. And whom do we have to blame for the terrible way we turned out? You're right, our mean mother.

Look at the things we missed. We never got to march in a protest parade, nor take part in a riot, and all the things that our friends did. She forced us to grow up into God-fearing, educated, honest adults.

And all this from a barefoot girl from Okalahoma who had to drop out of school at 16.

But I stand a little taller and I learned from her. I overheard my teenage son bragging to his buddy about how ***“My dad would take my head off if I did something like that...”*** So I thank God; He gave me the mother He did.

And today we are recognizing mothers. For surely, most of what they have done for us goes unnoticed and we just take it for granted.

Have you ever thought of this, God **GAVE** us our mothers. God has assigned our parents to us. And they are ours just as we are theirs, whether we have come to them biologically or were chosen by adoption.

I saw moms, single moms in the worse slums in Kampala, Uganda, take children into their huts to care for because the child had no one, both parents dead or gone. These were women, who had children of their own and no husband to help, struggling to feed her own children, take in urchins off the street.

Now I recognize that not all mothers are perfect. My mom wasn't perfect and neither was yours but you weren't a perfect kid either. We have two daughters and I think it is amazing to watch silly little girls grow up and turn into these wonderful moms.

We are here this morning to honor God and to honor our mothers, keep in mind that by honoring our mothers we ARE honoring God.

We treat God with reverence when we respect our parents, and specifically today, we are talking about our mothers. And one of the ways we honor our mothers is by showing them respect and learning from them.

In 2 Timothy 2:5, Paul is speaking to his disciple Timothy and says: *“I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.”* Timothy's mom & grandmother modeled what Sincere Faith looks like.

We all need to be taught.

Each one of us needs a guide. We need to learn how to live life. We need to be taught about what is really important. Someone has said, *"Mothers write on the hearts of their children what the rough hand of the world cannot erase."*

MOMS - There is no more influential or powerful role on earth than a mother's. No one can compare to the impact made by mothers. Their words are never **fully forgotten**, their touch and memory last a lifetime.

Abe Lincoln was right when he said, *"No one is poor who had a godly mother"*

Moms (and dads) REMEMBER YOU ARE...**Modeling God's role** until your child reaches the place where the role of authority shifts to God.

A professor from the University of California studied **1,738** "normal" middle-class boys and their families, beginning in grade school and following them through to manhood.

He identified the children with the **highest self-esteem** and **compared** them and their homes and childhood influences with those with a **low self worth**. **THIS IS WHAT HE FOUND:**

- A. The high-esteem children were **clearly more loved** and appreciated at home.
- B. The high-esteem children came from homes that within the boundaries of good behavior that were established there was freedom to grow and develop. They could express themselves without fear of ridicule.
- C. The high-esteem group came from homes where parents **had been significantly more strict in their approach to discipline**.

The **most** successful of the high-esteem group, the very top group, came from homes **that demanded the strictest accountability and responsibility**. Also the family ties remained the strongest in the families where discipline and self-control had been a way of life.

By contrast, the parents of the low-esteem group had created insecurity and dependence by their permissiveness. Their children were more likely to feel that the rules were not enforced and there was no discipline because no one cared enough to BE involved.

JUST LIKE THE BIBLE SAYS, *“If you are left without discipline -- then you are illegitimate children and not sons.”* Hebrews 12:8. What is that verse saying? It is saying that if you were not disciplined growing up then that must not have been your real mom & dad because your real mom and dad would have cared enough about you to discipline you.

This brings us to our next point: DISCIPLINE. Proverbs 23:12-14, *“Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge. Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.”*

1. Because discipline has been taken to **brutal extremes** in the past by misguided people some say that they will not discipline. I read about someone who drank so much water – trying to lose weight, I guess – that they died. But, you know what? I still drink water.

2. Discipline shows love. Rather than causing your child to question your love, discipline confirms your love. A child that lives with consistent, fair correction learns that you value him or her.

STORY -- I got a chance too see a child psychologist in action...**“Little Tommy that’s not appropriate behavior.”**

Moms (& dads) you need to.....

1. Be **consistent**
2. **Establish the rules firmly** so the children understand what is expected of them.
3. Hold your child -- YOU need to **show tenderness**.
4. Don’t spank **in front** of other people. The child should never be **surprised** by a spanking.
5. Deal with **Bad Attitudes**. It is a parent’s job to stifle rebellion.
6. Parents remember this, the **kind of relationship** you offer your child is one of the **single most influential factors** in shaping the kind of person he or she becomes.

Moms, parents, we have a very LIMITED time to do a good job on our kids. If you wait until they are teens it will probably be too late.

“The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.” Proverbs 29:15. You are going to raise your kids anyway -- why not try to do it right? **So what is right?**

First of all **BUILD CHARACTER!**

Counselors, psychologist, social workers, and police officers consistently point to childhood studies to explain a person's behavior. And so you read in the newspapers, *"The reason he ended up in jail is because he had a bad childhood."* We need to build character.

Proverbs 22:6, *"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."* So moms (& dads) we need to train our children!

If your children don't honor and obey you, whom they can see, how will they learn to obey God whom they cannot see? Barbara's LIFE verse. 3 John 4. *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."*

Remember...We honor God when we honor our mothers. But how do we do this? Let me make three recommendations. The first is...

A. Show Respect: In Proverbs 31:28, it says... *"Her children arise and call her blessed..."* And I have to say this has happened for Barbara, all our children adore her. When we do this for our mothers, when we demonstrate this kind of respect for what they have done for us, then we honor our mothers as God intended from the very beginning.

B. Be Good

One day **5 prisoners** sat looking at a magazine in a prison library. One said, "I Wish my mother had a house like the one in that ad." Another took the magazine and flipping through the pages, remarked, "I wish is that my ma had a car like that so she could come and see me." They passed it around until it came to a prisoner named Bill. Bill just sat there. Finally Bill spoke, "I wish," his voice sounded as if it were going to break, "that my mother had a good son."

We honor our parents when we are good. When we are a good son or a good daughter, we honor the parents God has given us, and in turn, honor God.

C. Learn. Our mothers taught us about life so that we would function well and be productive. They taught us so that we would be good citizens of our country and good citizens of the family of God.

Honor God today—by honoring your mother, whether she is with you today or not, respect her, for she is a gift from God to you; **Honor God today—by honoring your mother**, by being the best son or daughter you can possibly be.

Honor God today—by honoring your mother, by learning from her, listening to her, and applying it to your life.

Because of my mom & dad, I resist evil, I stand a little taller and I take pride in working hard and doing a good job. And I thank God that He gave me the mean mother that He did.

”Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” Ephesians 3:19-21.