

THE HOME UNDER GOD

How many times have you wanted to hug your mother and thank her for all she has done for you? For Anna Jarvis this desire was so great that she helped create a whole day of Mom-thanking. Did you know that the idea for Mother's Day was born in a small Methodist church in Grafton, West Virginia?

It was 1876 and the nation still mourned the Civil War dead. While teaching a Memorial Day lesson, Mrs. Anna Reeves Jarvis thought of mothers who had lost their sons. She prayed that one day there could be a "Memorial Day" for mothers. The prayer made a deep impression on one of Mrs. Jarvis' eleven children. Young Anna had seen her mother's efforts to hold the war-split community and church together. As she grew into adulthood, the younger woman kept Mrs. Jarvis's dream in her heart. On the day of her mother's death, Anna was determined to establish Mother's Day in her honor. She planned and arranged for a church service on May 10, 1908, which was dedicated to expressing gratitude for mothers everywhere. By 1910, Mother's Day was celebrated in forty-five states. Elated, Miss Jarvis told a friend, "Where it will end must be left for the future to tell. That it will circle the globe now seems certain."

On May 8, 1914, President Wilson designated the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day "for displaying the American flag and for the public expression of love and reverence for the mothers of the country."

And the carnation? Anna also initiated the custom of wearing carnations in order that mothers be further honored . . . and because it was her mother's favorite flower!

Appreciation of mother is thus a sound Christian attitude, and we do well to designate a special day to give mothers the recognition they deserve. It is for Christian mothers that we thank God. They prayed for us. In childhood they watched over us and steered us to God. They wove their consecration into the fabric of our lives. Their faith in us has kept us near God. And even after they are gone, they continue to influence us. Their memory is still a guiding light that leads us in the right way.

The Gospel story of an unnamed, insignificant Canaanite mother seems to embody the qualities and characteristics which go into making a good mother.

First, we notice that she was **Concerned** for her child(verse 22). I am sure that many of you remember the visits of your mother when she came to your bedside during the storm in the night, or when you had a stomach ache, or a virus. When the pain

comes in the night it is doubly fearful. Somehow nighttime difficulties take on a special terror.

“And when my body pained with sickness in the still of the night,
You’d hear my quiet whimpers and make everything right.”

I have memories of such nighttime visits. Somehow fathers never hear our whimpers, or hearing them, elbow their wives and say, “He/she is calling for you,” and then Dad goes back to sleep. The very fact that mother cared enough to ask, to look, to touch, did make things better. All was needed was mother’s kiss and touch.

James Dobson has written:

“Countless times each day a mother does what no one else can do quite as well. She wipes away a tear, whispers a word of hope, eases a child’s fear. She teaches, ministers, loves, and nurtures the next generation of citizens. And she challenges and cajoles her kids to do their best and be the best. But no editorials praise these accomplishments—where is the coverage our mothers rightfully deserve?”

Thank God for mothers and fathers who care enough for their child’s needs that they are willing to sacrifice for them. What impresses me in this story is that this poor mother was concerned for her child, and she went to Jesus for help. She believed enough in Him to seek His help. “My daughter,” was the focus of her concern.

When parents are concerned for their children and put their welfare as a priority, then we will see some changes in our homes. Children will grow mentally, emotionally, and spiritually in an environment of love and concern and be prepared to function well in the world. When God’s help is sought, this opens the way for good things to happen. One of the tragedies of today’s home is that parents are more concerned about *their* needs than about family togetherness. When you neglect to read your child a story, play with them, and spend time and talk with them, then don’t be surprised when they do not want to be around you. They would rather be with their friends.

Life is full of hurts, some physical and some emotional. Isn’t it wonderful to be able to affirm what the great hymn does? “Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices . . . Who from our mother’s arms, hath blessed us on our way with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.”

A second notable characteristic of this mother is, she was **Submissive**. (verse 25). In other words, she placed herself before Christ in a manner in which He could help her. God uses parents who are humble, who put themselves in a position before God which seeks direction, help, and strength; such a position which allows God to help. Notice her prayer: “Lord, help me!”

It is tragic when parents shirk their responsibility to teach their children religious values. I have heard many times, "We will not influence our children in making choices and decisions in matters of religion!" But why not? The ads will! The press will! The movies will! The neighbors will! The forces of evil will! The politicians will! We use our influence toward sports, dancing lessons, vegetables etc. Shall we ignore our children? May God forgive us if we do.

Peter Marshall said, "Let us not fool ourselves—without Christianity, without Christian education, without the principles of Christ ~~inculcated~~ *admonished* into young life, we are simply rearing pagans."

Julius Segal, co-author of *A Child's Journey: Forces that Shape the Lives of Our Young*, takes issue with the negative image of the strong mother figure who hovers over and controls the lives of her children. Segal wrote that there is something much worse for a child than to suffer the domination of the hovering mother; namely, to be the child of valueless, unattached, self-centered parents who are unwilling to give the time or the emotional commitment that parenting requires.

After talking with dozens of children, Segal claims to have heard a common plea from children: they say to mothers and fathers, "give us a sense of being wanted and cherished, a sense of uniqueness, and you will have given us that which only parents can give, but that without which we cannot survive."

"Love your children with all your hearts, love them enough to discipline them before it is too late.... Praise them for important things, even if you have to stretch them a bit. Praise them a lot. They live on it like bread and butter, and they need it more than bread and butter." (Lavina Christensen Fugal).

This woman was **Persistent** in her efforts to get Jesus' help. She was determined not to allow anything or anyone keep her from getting the help she sought for her child.

Many parents lack the determination to seek to do the best for their child. They keep their children in a guessing game as to whether they love them or not. Children look for consistency. They want to see us walk like we talk. Larry Branum wrote a poem titled, "Mothers Preach the Best Sermons." A section goes like this:

I've heard all the arguments and carefully constructed apologies,
And I, of all people, want to believe
That sermons have power to convince folks of
The reality and truth of the Christian faith,
~~But no sermon~~ have I preached, or homily have I heard
~~that~~ even comes close to being as eloquent or convincing
As the life that was lived by my mother.

The best sermons are not those preached from a pulpit; nor from parents' mouths. The best sermons are those lived before others.

One young lady wrote this about her mother. She titled it, "Mother -- The Complete Failure."

"I had the meanest mother in the whole world. While other kids ate candy for breakfast, I had to have cereal, oatmeal, eggs, and milk. My mother insisted upon knowing where we were at all times. You'd have thought we were on a chain gang. She had to know who our friends were and what we were doing. I am nearly ashamed to admit it, but she actually struck us, not once, but each time we disobeyed her.

"The worst is yet to come. My mother actually broke some child labor laws, for we had to wash dishes, make beds, learn to cook, shovel snow, mow the grass and all sorts of exhausting jobs. She insisted upon our telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

"As you can see, my mother was a complete failure. None of us have ever been on drugs, arrested, divorced, cheated on or beaten our spouse. Look at all the things we have missed. We never got high, never went to court, never had to explain to our children why their parents were not going to live together any more, never had the guilt of an extra-or pre-marital affair and a million and one things that our friends had. And whom have we to blame? That's right -- our mean mother. She forced us to grow up to be God-fearing, educated, honest and responsible adults.

"And it is with this background that I have now become a mother. When my children call me mean, I stand a little taller and am filled with pride. You see, I thank God for the meanest mother in the whole world, and I want to be just like her."

President Calvin Coolidge was asked to define America's greatest need. He said, "The greatest need of America is religion that centers in the home." The home is indeed the cornerstone of our whole social structure. For children it is the setting of the formative years in which the contour of personality is determined. Character, education, and Christian faith all have their roots in the home.

Since the home is all this, and since the home today is threatened by the rise of non-Christian attitudes and behavior, we must have clearly before us the Christian home under God, and strive earnestly with God's help to build and maintain it.

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