

Faith Of Our Mothers

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Today we give thanks to our God for inventing mothers. We lift them up in praise and prayer, that what they do may have influence for time and eternity. President Abraham Lincoln said, "All I am or ever hope to be I owe to my angel mother."

Someone sent me an email this week; maybe you received it. It goes like this: "A baby asked God, 'They tell me you are sending me to earth tomorrow, but how am I going to live there being so small and helpless?' God said, 'Your angel will be waiting for you and will take care of you.' The child further inquired, 'But tell me, here in heaven I don't have to do anything but sing and smile to be happy.' God said, 'Your angel will sing for you and will also smile for you. And you will feel your angel's love and be very happy.'

Again the child asked, 'And how am I going to be able to understand when people talk to me if I don't know the language?' God said, 'Your angel will tell you the most beautiful and sweet words you will ever hear, and with much patience and care, your angel will teach you how to speak.'

'And what am I going to do when I want to talk to you?' God said, 'Your angel will place your hands together and will teach you how to pray.' 'Who will protect me?' God said, 'Your angel will defend you even if it means risking its life.' 'But I will always be sad because I will not see you anymore.' God said, 'Your angel will always talk to you about Me and will teach you the way to come back to Me, even though I will always be next to you.'

At that moment there was much peace in Heaven, but voices from Earth could be heard and the child hurriedly asked, 'God, if I am to leave now, please tell me my angel's name.' God said, 'You will simply call her, 'Mom.'"

The gift of being able to become a mother was one of God's greatest given to this planet, pre-dating the entrance of sin. The command to "be fruitful and multiply" comes before the fall of mankind. Motherhood displays characteristics of godliness in a way that is unique. "Then God said, 'Let Us make man (mankind) in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every

creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man (mankind) in His image; in the image of God He created him: male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” Genesis 1:26-28.

From this Scripture we learn several important things. Notice the pronouns referring to God that are used in this passage; “Us” and “Our.” These, we learn from other Bible passages, refer to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit which together compose the Godhead. The word translated “God” in this text is the Hebrew Elohim (which means “mighty, or powerful Ones”), which is in the plural form (compare cherub and cherubim), and note that in the Hebrew language this means three or more (there is a separate “dual” form, indicated by an aim ending). So we see that there is a similarity in a “partnership” of leadership, the husband and wife to some degree corresponding to the leadership of the Godhead.

We note that Eve was included in the “mankind” which was created in God’s image. When the text says, “in the image of God He created him: male and female He created them,” we are being told that Eve’s qualities as wife and prospective mother reveal something about God which would have been incomplete had Adam been alone. The completeness of the portrayal of the “image of God” is displayed in the “male and female” creation of mankind.

When God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him” (Genesis 2:18), it wasn’t merely for Adam’s sake that Eve was created. It was also that a more complete revelation of God’s character be revealed and illustrated through the combination of man and woman, together which would become “mankind.”

This “motherly” aspect of the character of God is brought to view by many Scriptures. Because of sin, the picture of God as illuminated in motherhood has sometimes dimmed, at times becoming darkness itself. The mother in Solomon’s court was willing, in love, to give up her child to someone else when the king called for the sword, but there have been times when mothers have abandoned their children for selfish reasons. Unfortunately, our news reports are filled with too many of these accounts and others in which adults have not demonstrated God’s love.

Early last Tuesday morning in Florida Jasmine Bedwell and her ex-boy friend, Anthony McTear Jr. were having a fight during which he threw the car seat

containing Jasmine's son, Emanuel Murray, across the room, causing the 4-month old child to hit the concrete floor of the apartment. Anthony then picked up the boy and drove off in his car with him. When on Interstate 275, while the car was moving, McTear threw the infant out of the car's window. The dead body of the little Emanuel was discovered shortly thereafter on the side of the Tampa freeway. McTear was charged with first degree murder.

Most mothers are loving. But though we may be able to see God's affection reflected in a mother's love, His love goes beyond even that of a faithful mother. "But Zion said, 'The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.' 'Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands.'" Isaiah 49:14-16. Later the Lord through this same prophet declared, "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you." Isaiah 66:13.

God's "mother-like" love is revealed in one of His names in Scripture. One of the names of God used frequently in the Old Testament is translated as "Almighty." From the English rendering, we might suppose that the strength, the might and power of God is being featured by this term. Many would be surprised to know that in Hebrew that title is "El Shaddai," which is from the root shad which means "breast." It is God's nurturing, mothering care that is emphasized. If you read the passages in which this title of God is used and keep this in mind, the meaning will become clearer. (See for example, Genesis 49:25.) Jesus compares His love to that of a mother hen sheltering her chicks. Matthew 23:37.

Motherhood is godly. Motherhood is a gift from above. It may be that not everyone here was blessed with a mother who exhibited godly traits consistently, but I'm sure many of us can say, "Thank God for our mothers." I can say that today.

My own mother was laid to rest about a year ago. It was her prayer to have children, two boys and two girls. However, no children came to her in her first marriage. That marriage, to someone named "Anderson," didn't last, the husband proving unfaithful to the marriage vow. But God answered her prayer and she met another "Anderson," the one who would become my father. She became Mrs. Anderson for the second time.

No, she wasn't perfect, but she was a genuine Christian and did her best to raise her children in a home in which Jesus was honored. About ten years into this marriage my mom and dad were invited by their family doctor to some meetings,

at which they heard “strange” things like the Sabbath. At the conclusion of the meetings, my mom and dad realized that what they had heard was Bible truth, and took their stand to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Although many years later my dad’s mom would also accept these truths, no one else in the family did, and on my mom’s side of the family this resulted in her being cut off and literally disowned by her family. Nevertheless, my parents were faithful to their convictions.

Raising a family took sacrifice, for there were four children and dad had been able to progress no farther than the eighth grade in school. Through the blessing of the Lord, hard work and strict management, a measure of prosperity became theirs, although I must confess with some chagrin that the home in which I grew up, a three-bedroom-one-bath home purchased by my parents in the 1950’s, would fit inside my garage. But we did alright. We never went hungry. They provided the things that we really needed; emotional security, a stable family relationship and the basic necessities of life. Dad worked in San Diego at National Steel and Shipbuilding (“Nassco”) and eventually advanced to the status of foreman.

Until the fourth child reached school age, my mother was a “stay-at-home” mom. Her habits of industry and self-sacrifice were exemplary. When she began employment, back in the very early 1960’s, she made for herself about a half a dozen dresses to wear to work. They were modest dresses of sturdy fabric.

As I mentioned, she passed to her rest last year. As we went through her bedroom closet, there were the same dresses, nearly fifty years later, and not many others, a testimony to her thrift and sacrifice. As we paged through the volumes of photographs, covering decades, there was mom, invariably in one of those dresses. Along with that, as we sifted through her financial records and checkbook, we couldn’t help but notice the many charities which were monthly recipients of her generosity.

It wasn’t merely her astute management of money; her godly example in Christian living was a shining light. Her consistent Christian deportment stood unshaken through the years. Her daily prayers for the watch care of her children and others were untiring. I look forward to seeing my mother again when Jesus comes back. I’m so glad that I re-entered the gospel ministry while she was still alive to see it. I thank God for my mother!

The Lord God formed the first home and appointed Eve the first mother. While the father was to be priest in the home, mother would occupy a special place in

nurturing and caring for the children. As we noted a few weeks ago, in the original model instruction for the children came at mother's knee. This is how Jesus was taught. Home schooling isn't an invention of our generation!

The faithfulness of the mothers of Israel is exemplified by the fidelity of those who listened, learned and became productive instruments of the Lord. There is a special class of those whose education at home was shortened by circumstance. Rachel, and the step mothers who raised Joseph after her death, had only a short time to instruct him in the ways of the Lord before he would be betrayed and sold into slavery in Egypt. The lessons faithfully administered kept Joseph on a straight path, and when temptation was offered he replied, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

The devout Jochabed knew that she had only a short time to instill the lessons of piety and obedience in the mind of Moses before he would be whisked away by the daughter of Pharaoh to live in a palace of sumptuous luxury. Temptation would meet his eye at every turn. What would keep his mind on the invisible God of the Hebrews and not be allured by the gods and gold of Egypt, the enticement of a future throne? It would be the principles of righteousness implanted in his mind by a faithful mother, through the help of the Lord, that made the difference for Moses.

When it came time to decide, Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. What a reward awaits Jochabed! How delighted she will be to see the leader Moses became!

There was Hannah who donated her son Samuel to serve in the temple, taking advantage of every moment to instill love and devotion in his little heart before she fulfilled her vow and lent him to the Lord's work.

There was the mother of the nameless miss who served in the house of Namaan, whose testimony resulted in the healing of her master from the dreaded leprosy. Her mother must have taught her well, for her to be true to God in a heathen land.

There were the mothers of Daniel and his friends, who gave faithful lessons in godly living to their sons, so that when they were removed from their presence they continued to walk in the narrow way and make decisions for God. These mothers had only a limited time to teach their children the ways of the Lord, but they made use of their opportunities well.

Of course, there was Mary, entrusted by the Lord to be the mother of Jesus. No, Mary was not perfect. She confessed her sinfulness and her reliance on her Redeemer. Yet she gave herself wholeheartedly to the work to which she was called, in providing motherhood to the world's Savior. What a sacrifice she bore we can only imagine. Being stigmatized by the faithless through the virgin birth of Jesus fashioned a cross for her to bear which we'll never know.

There was Elizabeth, mother of the stalwart John the Baptist, who fulfilled her commission in rearing the one who was to announce the coming Messiah.

Eunice and Lois, the mother and grandmother of Timothy, stand as champions in the hall of motherhood. It is worthy of note that the name Lois is included by Paul in his commendation. The apostle refers to Timothy's faith "which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also." II Timothy 1:5.

There is a crown that awaits the faithful grandmother who guides little feet into the paths of righteousness. Sometimes it is the influence of a devoted grandmother that makes the difference in a child's life. The grandparent may not be alive to see the harvest from the seeds sown, but their ministry does not pass unnoticed. God bless the grandmothers who pray with their grandkids, who bring them to church and seek their spiritual wellbeing. They and dedicated mothers will receive an untarnished reward for their ministry in the cause of God in rearing little ones. The home is the greatest mission field in the world. Who can estimate the value of godly encouragement? Who can put a value on one soul saved for Jesus?

Today the home is under attack. The Christian home, as designed by the Creator in Eden is being assaulted. Other variant forms of the original design are being pushed forward as being acceptable. The ones who do this probably don't know what they are doing. Jesus looks upon them in pity and love and entreats their forgiveness, as He did those who put Him on the cross.

But there is one who knows exactly what he is doing in attacking the home, and his name is Satan. He recognizes the benefits of a godly home. He senses the security, the fortress of a home in which principles of righteousness are honored. He despises the mothers who teach their children about Jesus and the life to come, mothers who read the Bible to their children, who bring them to church, who pray with them and encourage them to excel in service to God and man. God bless the mothers like Sonya Carson who raised her son, Dr. Benjamin Carson from the

poverty of a ghetto to be a blessing to others in medical missionary work. Only eternity will reveal the final results of mothers' efforts.

Mothers today have an even greater responsibility in bringing up their children and shielding them from those influences which would lead them away from God. Satan has corrupted society to the degree that wherever anyone turns he is confronted by evil. Happy the mother who makes her home a fortress against the attack of Satan!

Today we lift you up, mothers and grandmothers! May your tribe increase. May you receive the wisdom of Solomon in making the soil of your home garden suitable for the young plants to grow and mature in Christ. We pray for you that you will be effective in your work of training young minds to love Jesus.