

Five Things Our Mothers Taught Us

Mothers. None of us would be here if they weren't around. Am I right or am I right? But our moms are so much more than just the person who brought us into the world. I don't know about you, but there is a universe of knowledge I gleaned from my mom. For this Mother's Day, the REO team wanted to honor our moms by relating five of the important lessons we learned from them.

Vickie Speer

When I was around 6 years old or so, I was at the supermarket with Mom, and we had finally made it to the checkout line. I asked her if I could get some Starburst candy, and she flat out said "No"...but I just couldn't take that for an answer. When she wasn't looking, I wedged the Starburst in between a few other items on the conveyor belt and hoped she wouldn't notice.

My devious plans were foiled, but not before the cashier had already scanned the candy into the register. My mom held her up from her scanning, and the cashier asked if she should take it off and shelve it. For some reason, mom left it on the bill and bought it. And then, she didn't let me have the candy. Oh man, it was so much worse knowing for weeks that the candy was in our possession, sitting alone up in the cupboard. The poor, lonely candy. The poor, deprived child.

I probably learned my lesson: No means no. At the very least, I haven't forgotten it. Still, once enough time had passed, I snatched the candy out of the cupboard and asked Mom if I could have some, and she just hurriedly unwrapped it and let

me eat it. I think she forgot about its significance. I ate it with the weight of shame upon me. How could something so sweet be simultaneously so bittersweet? Cast your pejorative gaze upon my childhood shenanigans and learn, O reader. A Starburst eaten with a clear conscience is worth 500 eaten in shame. (D.A. Speer)

Betty Lou Plunkett

When we were kids Mom told us that “Here at The Rock, we have two basic rules. The first rule is: obey all rules. Secondly: Do not write on the walls, as it takes a lot of work to erase writing off of the walls.” Just kidding. That’s Barney Fife. Though she kept decided discipline and order, Mom was definitely not a Barney Mom, constantly spouting off rules, regulations, and long rants of “wisdom.” Mom was not one to dole out a lot of such talk and sage quotable diatribes. Her wisdom was largely displayed through how she lived. Most of what I learned from her I learned by watching her live life and interact with those around her. And I learned so much. One of the ways she most impacted me was via her enduring innate joyfulness and contentment in all situations no matter how dark. Mom had been through a lot of heavy moments in her life: Months in the hospital as a child after accidentally drinking a glass of lye soap; months worth of hours spent in the hospital with me for various reasons; raising four kids; years of serving as a home missionary, foreign mission, and teacher; and finally lymphatic cancer. Yet, for as long as I knew her (since 1973) she always maintained her contented spirit. This is not to say she never got sad or anything like that. Yet even in sadness, there was always that feeling of joy radiating from her. No matter how dark situations got, she had a way of making it feel like matters weren’t that bad. This was even true with her final battle with cancer. Like Paul the Apostle, she had learned the secret of being content even in

the darkest moment. That secret was their hope in Jesus. Her contentment and joy came to a head just minutes before she died. During those moments she expressed an almost rapturous joy in Jesus, and we who were present could almost see heaven itself. (Ben Plunkett)

Yvonne Cannon

I remember once my senior year in high school my best friends Wade and John came over one afternoon on a school day – I don't recall why – but they ended up staying for dinner even though we hadn't planned for them to do so. My mother cooked extra without even a second thought. Then, again without really planning it, they slept over. On a school night.

The reasons these things happened is because my mother created a home environment where people felt welcomed to treat it like it was theirs. My living room was often packed with our friends on weekend nights when we were teenagers. Some of our friends didn't even knock when they came over. People of other races and ethnicities were welcomed into our home. My dad's hunting buddies, Super Bowl parties, Seinfeld finale parties, Bible College visitors, church prayer times...our house was (and still is) constantly being used to host people. Even though our house was well kept, even when my mother worked full time, we worried far less about stains on the carpet and spills in the kitchen than we did about making sure everyone in Turbeville, SC knew there was a place where all were welcome. My dad is a great man, but my mother was the main reason this was so.

So of the million things I have learned from her, most of them from observation and not words, hospitality rises to the top. It takes humility and sacrifice to open up your home to so many people. It's supremely inconvenient. I wish I could say I appreciated it back then, but I do now. It's one of the most

Jesus-like things about my mother's life. And one I hope to emulate here in Chicago. (Gowdy Cannon)

Judy Lytle

There is nothing more empowering than hearing the words "you are good at..." It may even be more important for a parent to affirm the things their children do well than to correct their short-comings. As a teen, I more or less floated through life. I am not particularly athletic, musical, or creative. I was fairly shy and just starting to take an interest in academics. Some people can do well just about anything they attempt. Well, I had (have) very few skills. I just was. When I was in high school, my mother told me that I would make a good history teacher or perhaps a good chef. Studying history and cooking were two things I did well and loved doing. That conversation with my mother established the trajectory of my life. This morning I got up early to pray with 30 of my students before taking their AP United States History exam. I also baked them homemade cinnamon rolls. It has been 20 years since my mother said, "You are good at..." but I am living out the empowerment from that conversation nearly every day. (David Lytle)

My mom is the hardest worker I know. If there is a job to do, she does it. If there is a meal to make, a person to visit, a floor to tile, a room to paint, a class to teach... You get the point. Unfortunately, I did not inherit that impressive work ethic from my mother. In my defense, no one in the history of the world has a work ethic like my mother, but it would have been nice to get even 50% of the inner drive she possesses. Also in my defense, I do work very hard if it is for something I love. But my mom works hard period. Full stop. Love or no love, she jumps into every task as if it is the most important

thing in the world. And while I don't have that same character trait, I do have the best example anyone could ask for to push me, nudge me, and even unintentionally shame me a little into working harder on things that I don't love that much. (Phill Lytle)