

## The Mind of a Mother

Today we celebrate mothers. That is to say, we celebrate God's celebration of mothers. Because He came up with the idea of mothers in the first place.

Today I'd like to look at a couple of qualities that should be celebrated regarding mothers. And with that in mind we take our cue from the most famous mother of all—Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Two events are recorded in the second chapter of Luke, where Mary is described as having a particular reaction to receiving information about her Son Jesus.

They take place in two dramatically different settings. And Mary's emotional state at one event is very different from her emotional state at the other event.

And those differences—coupled with the fact that there was a 12-year hiatus between the two events—all of this is evidence that Mary's reaction reflected something that was utterly consistent in her life.

Her reaction indicates a common trait shared by most moms. It is something that all of us can benefit from, if we'll try and copy what comes so naturally to them.

The first passage, as you might have expected, is connected with the birth of Jesus. It seems that some shepherds had a visit from an angel, and they were given information regarding the true identity of Mary's newborn baby boy.

### Luke 2:17-19

**17** Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.

**18** And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

**19** But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart.

And then much later on in the chapter, Luke records the occasion when Jesus' parents were afraid He had been kidnapped or something.

And they finally tracked Him down at the Temple in Jerusalem talking with all of the religious teachers there. And after such a nerve-wracking search, Mary was understandably a little irritated.

### Luke 2:48-51

**48** So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought You anxiously."

**49** And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

**50** But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

**51** Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.

So did you catch the detail that is common between the two passages? Mary kept these things in her heart. And in the first passage, it says she pondered them in her heart. In other words, she kept thinking these things over and over again.

But I find it interesting that even though her husband Joseph was present on both occasions, nothing is said about him in this regard.

And maybe that's par for the course. Because to be honest, guys can be a little slow on the uptake when it comes to noticing things. Certainly not as quick as their wives are.

Not much escapes the notice of a Mom. I remember hearing the rumor when I was little that moms had eyes in the back of their heads.

Of course, they never let you see them. But how else would they pick up on all the things they do?

And then there's another thing about Moms: their minds never stop working.

Now you have to understand, this isn't a trait for moms alone. No, they developed this ability before they were mothers. This trait becomes a reality when they begin to function as wives.

Any husband can attest to that. "**How does she ever think of all these things?**" I have 46 years of experience in this department. And I've lost track of how many times when I am just processing the basic facts of a situation, my wife already has 15 possible ramifications bouncing around inside her head.

This ability to perceive so many details is natural for a mom. They worry. They plan. They tie up loose ends. They are eternally vigilant. In this respect, mothers function like radar. A combination of Radar and the

deep-search capacity of artificial intelligence.

And most Dads are in awe of that.

Not to put Dads down. Not at all. Without sounding self-serving I have to say that Dads are irreplaceable in their own way. We'll talk about that in a few weeks when Father's Day rolls around.

But today is Mother's Day, and we're talking about how good moms are at noticing things. And what they notice, they ponder. And a mom's pondering can make a big difference in a person's life.

So let's take a quick look at a few passages dealing with this, and see if we can learn a thing or two from the moms in our lives.

Most of us are aware that the Bible teaches that husbands and fathers are the head of the house—from a theological standpoint. Some folks find that hard to accept, but it's what the Bible plainly teaches.

However, in daily practice it is the wife and mother who keeps things on track. Paul emphasizes this point strongly when writing to Timothy, as he gives his young associate a brief job description for a wife and mother.

Just 6 words:

**I Timothy 5:14**

"...marry, bear children, manage the house..."

And just so there is no misunderstanding, that word "**manage**"—it literally means to rule. In the book of Proverbs, Solomon twice speaks of the need to obey the law of your mother.

That's just how it works. Dad patrols the perimeter. But mom runs the heart of the home. Because she is wired differently, she notices more, she ponders more, and she is the first line of defense in a child's life.

Now, if for some reason the mother fails in that regard the outcome will not be good for her child.

**Proverbs 29:15b**

... a child left *to himself* brings shame to his mother.

Think that phrase over for a moment. "...**a child left to himself**..." A child who is allowed to navigate through life without adequate control on the part of the parents is left to himself or herself. In this case, we're talking specifically about moms.

Because here's the deal: a child left to himself will ultimately need to be saved from himself.

And the kind of thoughtful oversight that Solomon alludes to here is one of a mom's biggest contributions to the ultimate happiness of her children. From time to time a mom will have to step in to save her children from themselves.

Did your mom ever save you from yourself? I'll bet she did. Because that's what moms do. Sometimes they do it in rather unique ways.

Most of you will remember this man, Michael Duncan. He's best known for his starring role in the movie *The Green Mile*. He died too early at the age of 55.

He was a literal giant of a man, standing 6' 5" and weighing in at 315 pounds. All solid muscle.

He was only five years old when his father left the family, but his mother Jean Duncan picked up the pieces and ensured the best possible upbringing for her son.

She wasn't a large woman, but Michael's mother was a huge presence in his life. And she saved him from himself.

Like all of us, when he was young, Michael was impressionable. And as a young teenager, what really caught his eye was a certain group of guys in the neighborhood. They all belonged to a gang. And they were living out loud, and it looked like they were enjoying life as much as anyone could.

He could always spot these guy on the street, because they would dye their hair. Not all of it, just a little red patch on the side. That's all it took to stand out enough so you could tell who they were from a distance.

And Michael thought that was really something. It's amazing to me what grabs a person's attention. But that's what grabbed his, and Michael wanted in.

Tom Hanks gave the eulogy at Michael's funeral. They both starred in that Green Mile movie, and they became good friends.

At some point Michael was relating this story to Tom Hanks, and Tom got curious. So he asked Michael, "**How do you go about joining a gang?**"

Michael said, *“Well, I just went up to the group of guys hanging out on the corner and said, ‘I want to join your gang.’ So they said, ‘OK.*

*And all of a sudden a bunch of them just piled up on me and proceeded to beat me up for about 20 minutes. But after that was over, they were all friendly and then they went and dyed that patch in my hair. Just like that I was in—I now belonged to the gang.”*

So at this point it was getting to be dinner time, and Michael heads home. He yells out, *“I’m home!”* and walks into the kitchen where his mom has her back to him.

She was busy at the stove frying up some pork chops for dinner. He sits down at the kitchen table, and he didn’t say anything about what just happened. No, he’s waiting for his mom to look over and notice his hair. Because now he’s got this little red patch dyed in it.

She finally turns around and looks at him, and her eyes grew wide. She says, *“What in the world have you done to your hair?”* He says, *“I joined that gang today. And this red circle in my hair means I’m a member.”*

He had this big smile on his face, because he kind of expected his mom to be impressed. And she was impressed. But not in the way he expected.

But at that point all she said was, *“Hmm.”* And so she turns back to the stove and finishes frying up the pork chops. Then she walks over to the kitchen table with that skillet full of pork chops, and Michael

figures she’s going to dish him up a plate. But instead of that, just hauls off and whacks him hard across the back of his head with that skillet.

And pork chops go flying and Michael’s hair is singed, and he’s crying and he says, *“What did you do that for?”*

And she’s standing there glaring at him with fire in her eyes. She says, *“You go get your sister’s scissors and cut that mess out of your hair.”* And he got up right then and there and did what he was told.

And now he’s in front of the bathroom mirror with this big lump on his head. He’s crying and cutting that beautiful red spot out of his hair. And it left him with this weird hole in his big afro hairdo.

But that’s not the worst of it. Because now his mom pokes her head in the bathroom and says, *“And when you’re finished with that, you go right down there and tell those boys that you are not going to be part of that gang.”*

And that’s exactly what he did. He goes down the corner and catches up with the gang, and he says, *“I can’t be part of your gang no more.”* And they say, *“Why not?”* And he says, *“My momma says I can’t be part of your gang.”*

So as he’s telling this story, Tom Hanks asked, *“So what did they do?”* Michael said, *“They beat me up all over again.”*

Now there was a young man who was headed for big trouble. Thankfully, he was not left to himself. Nope. His mom stepped

in and did what she figured she had to do. She set him straight, and Michael Duncan did his mother proud.

And you want to know what I think? I think when Michael's mother went back to that stove to finish cooking those pork chops...I think she was pondering. Pondering what to do next.

But smacking him in the head with a skillet? Well, I'd say that was a little over the top. I couldn't recommend taking that approach. But you've got to admit, it's hard to argue with results.

And so here's the bottom line—kids can't raise themselves. They mustn't be left to themselves, because they will ruin themselves. And on occasion, they will need to be saved from themselves.

The *NASB* puts it this way:

**Proverbs 29:15b** *NASB*  
*...a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.*

Like I said, Dad's patrol the perimeter and Moms take care of the heart of the home. But in this case Dad wasn't around, and mom stepped up and took care of the perimeter just fine.

Hey—we all have stories we could tell about our moms stepping in and putting the brakes on our thinking or our behavior.

That's a mom's love in action. Because the first line of defense in a child's life to protect them from the evils of this world is a mom who's not afraid to lower the boom when it needs to be lowered.

So getting back to this morning's text, there were 2 things that we saw there:

- Mom's notice.
- And moms ponder.

And remember what Luke said about Mary:

**Luke 2:51b**  
*...His mother kept all these things in her heart.*

Mary remembered the important stuff. Like every mother under the sun has to do. So much they have to remember.

I heard they did a study recently over in England and found that *the average mother of school-age kids has 26 potential items* that need to be ready or are waiting to be dealt with on any given school day.

Mostly things that need to be taken care of before the kids leave the house.

Moms remember so much. And they keep remembering. Like God does. You are or you were always on her mind. Mothers reflect God's heart in that way.

**Luke 2:51b**  
*...but His mother kept all these things in her heart.*

And one more thing. All of this remembering and pondering leads to one more thing that moms do for their kids. And that's to pray. Moms pray for their kids.

I know that the only way we come to Jesus is in response to the influence of the Holy Spirit on our hearts. We don't just decide to come to Jesus because we are so smart or something.



In fact, Jesus said that no one comes to Him without that gracious influence of the Spirit drawing them.

But God uses human agency in the process of that work of bringing us to Christ. Someone's verbal witness to us, a sermon we hear, or just the example that someone lives out before us. God uses all of these things and more to get our attention and draw us to Christ.

But I am convinced that of all the things that God has ordained to influence the heart of a child for Christ, close to the top of the list you will find a mother's prayers.

I believe that there will be a multitude of people in heaven who—from a human standpoint—got there on the wings of a mother's or grandmother's prayers. The examples in Scripture clearly spell out the powerful effect a mother's prayers can have in her child's behalf.

One of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament was Samuel, and not only his very existence but his powerful prophetic ministry were granted by God in answer to his mother's prayers.

Now what does this have to do with the rest of us? Well first of all, did your mom pray for you? My guess is she did. So why not take time to thank God for your mom and for the prayers she lifted up for you.

Thank him for all of her noticing, her pondering, and her praying. Thank him for all your mom has done for you. And all that she has meant to you—down through the years.

Now I need to speak to those whose experience in life doesn't mirror all the wonderful things we've noted in mothers today. Sometimes moms don't function as God intended for them to in the lives of their children.

And if that is your experience today, I understand how a message like this one is not easy to listen to.

In addition, there are those who lost their mothers during their formative years, either to death or by abandonment.

I don't want to preach on the blessing of mothers and ignore those situations. In that regard, I have just a couple of thoughts to mention, for what they're worth.

God made a point of promising additional direct involvement on His part in the lives of those who find themselves without a mother. Just consider the provisions He has in mind.

**Psalm 27:10**

**When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.**

This is nothing less than an added level of commitment from the Lord to anyone who has been abandoned or neglected by one or both parents.

David promises that the Lord will **"take them up."** God takes their abandonment to heart, and inserts himself into their circumstances in a way that goes beyond what might be considered standard procedure for Him. There is no other way to logically interpret that verse.

And then Jesus said something regarding His own life, and the principle behind it applicable to our own lives as well.

**Matthew 12:48-50**

**48** But He answered and said to the one who told Him, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?”

**49** And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers!

**50** For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”

There is something about the people of God as a community that can help to fill in the gaps that exist in our lives because of dysfunctional family situations.

And when I speak of the community of God’s people, I’m not talking about nominal church members, but strongly-committed followers of Jesus.

***...WHOEVER DOES THE WILL OF MY FATHER in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.***

Nothing takes the place of a mother. I’m not trying to say that anything can be a substitute for that.

But God has made provisions to help when mom completely out of the picture, or is not available, or just downright bad at her job of motherhood. God has made provision for some gaps to be filled through our relationship to the people of God as a community.

And now to conclude today’s message, one final thought. We spent a lot of time focused

on the idea of moms remembering. Like Mary.

**Luke 2:51b**

...but His mother kept all these things in her heart.

But today, all time for all their kids to remember. So let’s shout it out for all you’re worth to the moms in your life—even if they’re not with us anymore.

I’ve got a feeling they just might be able to hear you this morning.

All together now...***Happy Mother’s Day!***