

How Do You Love Your Mom?
Let Me Count the Ways
John 19:26-27

Good afternoon! It's Mother's Day once more. To all our beautiful moms, "Happy Mother's Day"! To all our handsome dads, make the mother happy today! And to our children, aren't you happy you have a mom?

On this day that we honor mothers, it's good for us to think about how much they really mean to us.

A Junior High science teacher lectured on the properties of magnets for an entire class. The next day he gave his students a quiz. The first question read like this: "My name begins with an "M," has six letters, and I pick things up. What am I?" Half the kids in the class wrote, "Mother."

That reminds me of the father who was trying to explain the concept of marriage to his 4-year-old daughter. He got out their wedding album, thinking visual images would help, and explained the entire wedding service to her. When he was finished, he asked if she had any questions. She pointed to a picture of the wedding party and asked, "Daddy is that when mommy came to work for us?"

Ralph Waldo Emerson has said, "Men are what their mothers make them" and an old Spanish proverb says, "An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy."

With all seriousness, this afternoon, we're going to look at one, if not the most, poignant scene in all of history. This is the scene where a heartbroken mother is looking helplessly at her suffering child. Let's look at John 19:26-27.

"When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home."

Mary witnessed the crucifixion from the foot of the cross. Can you even imagine how she must've felt?

Jesus turns to his mother and says, “Let him stand in my place as your son” then looks at John and says, “*Take care of her.*” John lived a very long life, and I believe he took care of Mary until she went to heaven.

On the cross, Jesus was bearing the weight of the sins of the whole world on His shoulders, yet He sees to it that His mother is taken care of after He is gone! As God, Jesus is dealing with eternal matters, but as a man, He’s showing all of us today how important it is to take care of and love our mothers!

This afternoon, let me tell you one important truth, You cannot be right with God when you are wrong with your mother. You are wrong when you don’t love her the way God wants you to love her. And God wants you to love her in many different ways.

This afternoon, I want to share with you just seven of these ways. If your mother is still alive, regardless of your age and her age, you can love her in these 7 ways. And so, this message is for every one of us here in this room, young and old alike. Because we all have mothers, right?

How do you love your mom?

1. Love her verbally.

Many of us have a problem with expressing our affection with words. Saying “I love you” is a struggle. It’s easier to see the dentist than forming those words with our mouth.

One example is John Peterson, senior lead writer for Hallmark. Do you know that after 11 years of writing poetry for Hallmark, he says that he’s now better able to tell his wife he loves her? But he recognizes that many card-buyers struggle to articulate feelings. That’s why he purposely writes Valentine’s cards that don’t include the word “love” – to let card-buyers themselves write “I love you” on the card.

Now, if some Americans struggle with this, how much more we Filipinos do? Like other Asians, we grew up in a culture where the exchange of “I love you” is not common. I remember when I was training as a missionary, one co-trainee, an American teen-ager, after being overwhelmed by something nice I did which I don’t remember anymore, said to me, “I love you, Rolly.” I was shocked. Because this was a guy! I thought he had a gender identity crisis. But, of course, I realized afterwards that it was just normal for Americans.

For Filipinos, this is not normal. Try saying that to another guy and you get punched. What’s normal for us is to say “I love you” through our kind deeds. Yet, many women and that includes mothers need to hear those words. They have been designed by God to feel a certain kind of excitement when they hear “I love you.”

Problem is, most men have this philosophy—**I don’t have to say I love you, you already know it. I have told you before, if I change my mind, I’ll let you know!**

That’s why many women are frustrated. They ask a man many times, “Do you love me?”

I hope your mom or your wife heard those words from you this morning. You should have said, “I love you” together with “Happy Mother’s Day.” If you haven’t, the day is not over yet, and they’re eager to hear those words from you.

2. Love her physically.

When’s the last time you gave your mom a big hug without her asking for it...or a kiss on the cheek, or a neck rub, or just sat on the couch and held her?

You know, she’s the first person who ever touched you...she wrapped you up in her womb for months, and you came out and her first priority was to hold you, and she cuddled you, stroked your head, rubbed your feet, held your little cheeks against her, gave you a finger to grasp...in love she did all these things, including grooming you with a licked thumb!

When you were little she could say, “give me sugar”, and you’d pucker up and she’d accept your wet, sloppy kiss and even say thank you! You give her bear hugs so tight she didn’t have to hold on to you...you’d just cling to her as she walked around!

She changed your diapers, potty trained you, and held the Kleenex for you to blow your nose! She wiped food off of your face years longer than she should have had to!

She constantly touched you! So, she deserves your touch. It would mean more to her than flowers or candy, or eating out, or a diamond necklace. Well, I just don’t know about the last one.

Your mom needs to feel your love too. She needs your loving touch. A touch encourages any person. It will sure mean a lot to your mom when she feels your touch. If you’re touching your phone or iPad more than your mom, something’s wrong.

3. Love her patiently.

Do you know the three most stressful jobs in the US? According to a study, the first most stressful job is held by the President of this country. Obviously, being president is very, very stressful. I can understand that considering all the issues he has to face and the decisions he has to make. The second most stressful job is the Administrator of a big hospital. I can understand that, too, as he deals with life-or-death situations at times. And third is the job of a pastor. And, of course, I certainly understand that. I’m not sure whether I should be happy to be in the top three.

But you know what? If mothering is a full-time job, I will rank it very close to the top, if not, the very top. Because you can be a president only for eight years, if you’re lucky, but the job of a mother is for a lifetime. Imagine that. And not only that, I think you’ll agree with me that a mother is all-in-one.

After giving birth, most moms then go on to act as parent, guide, role model, chef, chauffeur, confidant, homework monitor, banker, advisor, special events planner, gardener, cleaner, coach, nurse, psychologist, counselor, preacher... and the list goes on.

Mothers have an incredible job with no pay. No position in the business world compares to the physical, emotional, and spiritual commitment she has in motherhood.

Let me share with you a poem entitled, "No Occupation."

No Occupation

She rises up at break of day and through her tasks she races.
She cooks the meals as best she may and scrubs the children's faces
While schoolbooks, lunches, ribbons, too, all need consideration.

And yet the census man insists
She has— "No Occupation"

When breakfast dishes all are done
She bakes a pudding, maybe.
She cleans the rooms up, one by one,
With one eye watching baby.
The mending pile she then attacks
by way of variation.

And yet the census man insists
She has — "No Occupation."

She irons for a little while, then presses pants for Daddy.
She welcomes with a cheery smile returning lass and laddie.

A hearty dinner next she cooks (no time for relaxation),
And yet the census man insists
She has—“No Occupation.”

So, don't ever make the mistake of asking a lady, “Do you work, or stay at home?” Here's the point, in spite of all she does for us, we often become impatient with her. We get so used to her taking care of things we come to expect it and are outraged when we see that our clothes are still dirty or they're not ironed or we're out of bread or milk or we're not served our favorite meal.

How do we show our impatience? By scolding her, by growling at her, by raising our voice at her, by stomping our feet, by wanting to cut short our conversation with her on the phone.

Love her patiently. Because she's tender to your needs is no reason to take advantage of her. It's a reason to be patient and to love her all the more!

If you're a teen-ager, it's unfair for you to be more kind, considerate, patient with your friends and your friend's mothers than your own mother!

If you treated your friends like you treat your mom you wouldn't have friends, and if you treated their mom like you do yours, their mom wouldn't let their kid have anything to do with you! Your mom deserves better.

4. Love her attentively.

Mothers are the most attentive persons on earth when it comes to taking care of you. This attention started when she conceived you.

When she learned that she was carrying you in her womb, she began to be careful about the food she eats, the way she moves, the things she does, because she doesn't want to lose you. For nine months, all her attention was on you. She wants to bring you to the world safe and sound.

When you came out, her constant attention was still on you. She made sure you were fed properly and you got the right amount of sleep and you didn't get mosquito bites. When you got sick, she didn't get enough rest just so she could watch you through the night.

Then, into your school years, she walked you to school and did your homework and created your projects. In fact, even when you're already married and someone else is already taking care of you, she still wants to care for you and often wonders whether you're really being taken care of.

Her attention is not only limited to your physical needs. She's attentive also to your emotional needs. Mothers listen as you pour out your heart...she has a sympathetic ear, always has...and even as an adult you've gone to her when you want someone who will really listen and understand...and she'll always be on your side.

A few years back a documentary was shown about men going to execution for capital crimes. They interviewed the men and their mothers, too. Invariably the moms would say, He's such a good boy! The Interviewer would say: "Yes, but he killed people!...and the mother would respond, "I know, but he has a good heart!"

I remember years ago, my mom stayed us with for almost six months. She didn't have to but she did. My dad already wanted to go back to California because of his spring allergy but my mom prevailed on him to stay. Because she loves our children so much. She knew that if they left, Anabel and I would really have a hard time looking after our hyper-active kids. So, they stayed on and waited till the changing of the guards. I knew she sacrificed a lot but mothers are like that. She takes care of you and your children every time there's a chance. Now, it's my mother-in-law who has been taking care of our children. She has stayed longer than six months.

Our moms have paid attention to us since we were born and she asks for nothing in return. But, if we are sensitive and responsible enough, we can give her what she deserves, **our attention**, especially in her waning years.

Do we visit her and have a conversation with her? Do we call her and ask how she's doing? Do we volunteer to run errands for her? Do we help in organizing her home? Do we buy her things she needs, even little things, like soap, perfume, toothpaste, groceries? Do we take her out for dinner every now and then? Did we buy her flowers or a card for today?

Now, it's your turn to be her "rock"...someone she can lean on and someone who will take time to listen. She has her own concerns, fears, anxieties. As she gets old, she'll complain more and more especially about her physical well-being. I pray that we'll have the time to pay attention to her.

5. Love her gratefully.

There's this teen-ager who wrote his mom. "Dear Mom, I just thought of the things I'm doing for you every week. I drive you to the grocery store. I help you with the dishes. I answer the phone for you. I give you a backrub when you need it. If I did this for somebody else, it would amount to \$100. But because you're my mom, you owe me only \$90. Signed, Johnny.

His mom wrote back. "Dear Johnny, I just thought of the things that I've done for you everyday for the past 18 years. I changed your diapers, I gave you a bath, I took you to the doctor, I ate your left-overs, I enrolled you in school, I paid for your tuition" and on and on the list went for several pages. In the end, she said, "If I did this for somebody else, it would amount to more than a million dollars. But because you're my son and I love you, you owe me nothing. Signed, your loving mother.

Folks, in reality, it would be impossible to enumerate all the meals, diapers, sleepless nights, room cleanings, baths, launderings she has done...bottom line is, we owe her big time!

Some of us, however, are not so grateful about mom. We take for granted all the things she's done for us. We say, "Well, that's her responsibility anyway." And so, we take her for granted. She calls us, leaves a message on the cellphone, and we don't return her call. She emails us or texts us or pm's and it takes a long time before we reply, if ever we reply at all. She gives us advise, but we put it aside and do our own thing.

I don't think those are the things that a person with a grateful heart does. It's not that she's expecting anything in return. Truth is, she doesn't need anything from you. All she needs is a sincere thank you, and a lot of respect from you.

6. Love her generously.

A mother is always generous with her love. There's nothing that would hold her back from loving you. She is self-sacrificing. She is unselfish. Before she spends on herself, she spends on you first. Before she thinks of her comfort, she thinks of your comfort first. She clears her schedule so she can run you around...she gives up opportunities so you can have more opportunities! She even puts her life on the line just to show you how much she loves you.

That's the same kind of love we ought to show her. Actually, there's nothing too good for her, we could never repay her, but we ought to die trying before she dies!

Loving her generously doesn't really mean buying her stuff and spending a lot though that would be nice. What it means is that we be extravagant in the way we show our love for her, that we will show it more often, more deeply, and more unselfishly. It means sometimes making a bit of a sacrifice in order to show her we love her.

7. Love her honorably.

Let's read together Exodus 20:12, "*Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.*"

To honor our parents is the most loving thing to do. According to Webster's Dictionary *honor* is high regard or great respect given, received, or enjoyed. Thus, *to honor* is to show great respect or high regard for.

How do you then honor your mother?

First, by being respectful. Filipinos have this tradition of "pagmamano" or kissing the hands of our elders. Why don't we bring this back? In the Philippines, it's becoming passe, how much more in this adopted country of ours? Wouldn't it be nice to teach this to our children? Subconsciously and consciously, it reminds them that elders need to be respected. Another way of showing respect is just by being grateful to her. So, you honor your mom by being respectful. That means not answering back. You know what I mean. Your mom is your best teacher and she is most experienced. She just wants what's best for you. Don't think she's curtailing your freedom or anything like that. Be respectful.

Still another way of honoring your mom is by being obedient to her.

Ephesians 6:1 says (let's read), "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*"

You see, the highest honor that you can give your mom is by obeying her. If you are not yet an adult, God tells you to obey your mom because this is the right thing to do. Obeying your mom is like obeying God. Disobeying your mom is disobeying God. God put her there in his place to watch over you because he cares for you. God loves you that's why he gave you your mom. But what if my mom is not a Christian? If what she's teaching you or asking you to do doesn't contradict your deeply-held Christian beliefs, then by all means, obey.

On the other hand, if your mom's a Christian and she teaches you something contrary to your faith, then you can disobey. But you have to reason out respectfully.

Now, if you're already an adult, whether married or not, you're not obligated to obey. You can decide for yourself.

When I was in elementary school, I would ask my mom's permission to play with other kids after lunch and after I've done my homework. She would say "yes" after extracting a promise from me to come back home at 4 pm. And I would come back at 4 in obedience. But when I became an adult and started working, I never asked her permission anymore. It would be absurd for me to say to her, "Mom, can I play bowling with my officemates after work?" And it would be as absurd for her to say, "Sure. Just promise to be back by 9." And, of course, as a married person, I don't ask her, I ask my wife. And I obediently say, "Yes, dear".

Nevertheless, obedience is most especially necessary when your mom's teachings or admonitions pertain to the Lord.

Thus, you should obey her if she urges you to become closer to God, to grow in your faith. In this respect, young and adult children are both to obey. There are no excuses. For the Lord himself will surely be delighted in anyone obeying their parents in this regard. **Proverbs 1:8-9 tells us, "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck."**

Finally, the third way in which you can honor your mom is by being godly. This means walking in the ways of the Lord and doing it in your own volition rather than waiting for your mom to admonish you. When people see that you are following the Lord and taking seriously your commitment to him then this brings honor to your mom.

Folks, especially our young children here, I hope this Mother's Day, this message will not just enter one ear, and exit another. I hope it rests in our heads and in our hearts as well.