



## The Stretch Marks of a Mother's Love

Several years ago, an ad agency created a campaign for their clients to impress upon the public at large how important mothers are. They created a set of calculations to help everyone determine how much they owed their mother.

The first measurements were all about the time and effort a mother invests in her growing baby during her pregnancy and during her labor when she gave birth.

The calculations asked each person to include the time their mother spent in labor delivering them—the amount of weight she gained carrying them and the diet she voluntarily followed while she was pregnant to ensure her new baby was as healthy as possible.

Finally, each person was asked to consider the stretch marks that would be etched on their mother's body for the rest of her life as a memory of her body stretching to accommodate them—her baby.

And those were only the calculations for carrying a baby and giving birth—in some respects when babies are born that's when a mother's work, her sacrifice and her love really begins, and never ends!

So how much do we owe our mothers? How much are the stretch marks of a mother's love worth? We can never repay our mothers, can we?

The love of a mother is truly Christ-centered—it's a love that is given without consideration of repayment—it's a grace that outdoes itself, day after day and week after week and year after year.

Here are a few lyrics from Country and Western singer Paul Overstreet's

song about mothers, titled "I Won't Take Less Than Your Love."

*"How much do I owe you?" to the mother said the son*

*"For all that you have taught me in the days when I was young*

*Shall I bring expensive blankets to cast upon your bed?*

*And a pillow for to rest your weary head?"*

*And the mother said, "I won't take less than your love, sweet love.*

*No, I won't take less than your love.*

*All the comforts of the world could never be enough.*

*And I won't take less than your love."*

What do mothers want for the stretch marks of their love? They simply want nothing less than our love. From a mother's perspective, the decision to have a child is like deciding forever to have your heart go walking around, exposed to the world, outside your body.

Visible stretch marks are the scars of sacrifice and the labor—the ordeal a mother's body endured as it made room not just for one life, but one more—and prepared that new body for a life of its own.

Women who thought they knew all about love find out, as they become mothers, what love is really about and what it involves.

Many of you are mothers, and each of you has a story about each and every one of your children. You remember them—you pause over the old photographs in the albums and relive the memories of your children growing up.

As a mother, you don't begrudge the stretch marks of your love—your sacrifices and selfless service on behalf of your children is what mothers do—and you gladly gave

them your heart, your soul, your resources and your love. You gave your children time, talents and treasures. You gave them your all.

Mothers gain and lose pounds—mothers have scars and stretch marks, each one telling a story. Mothers lose elasticity of their skin and bodies as they age—mothers lose hair, teeth and muscle tone.

But mothers never lose the memories of their love, etched not only in their bodies in their scars and stretch marks, but also deeply in their souls and hearts as memories that will never end.

To you mothers out there, wherever you are—thank you! Thank you for the scars you bear, the stretch marks that are the trophies of your love.

Thank you for the commitment of your time—of your endless work washing clothes, folding them, making meals, packing lunches for school, sitting down and helping with homework, holding hands and wrapping your arms around the tears and hurts that were a part of your child's journey into maturity.

Thank you for helping us see a glimpse of the love of our heavenly Father, for not keeping track of all your efforts expecting that one day your child would pay you back.

Thank you for all that is grand, inspirational and majestic about a mother's love. Thank you for the stretch marks of a mother's love. □

—Greg Albrecht

Join us for our complete Mother's Day sermon "The Stretch Marks of a Mother's Love" at the audio teaching ministry of Christianity Without the Religion, the week of May 14, 2017.