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Mothers and the Grace of God

By Greg Albrecht

She pulled into the mall parking lot only to find that it seemed everyone else in town must have decided to go shopping on the same day at the same time. She finally found a parking place, braved the bustling crowds, visited several stores and struggled to find and purchase the items she wanted.

After a few hours she was exhausted, so she decided to stop for a coffee break at the food court. After purchasing a cup of coffee and a little bag of cookies, which she put in her shopping bag, she sat down at one of the crowded tables. Sipping on her coffee, she took out a magazine and started reading and then reached into the bag and took out a cookie.

A few seconds later the man

sitting directly across from her, who was engrossed in his electronic tablet, reached into the bag and took out a cookie as well. She marveled at his arrogance, helping himself to her cookies. Somehow she found enough self-control not to tell the man off.

She kept reading her magazine, (according to my unimpeachable sources the magazine was either *The Plain Truth* or *Christianity Without the Religion* magazine) reached for her coffee and then into the bag of cookies, removing another. Within a few seconds, the man reached into the bag as well, helping himself to another cookie. Now she was really getting upset. There was only one cookie left in the bag.

This stressed shopper was just about to come unglued and give

the man a piece of her mind when he took out the last cookie, *broke it in half*, and offered her the other piece. He picked up his electronic tablet, put his half of the cookie in his mouth, smiled at her and walked away.

She was so steamed that her temperature was hotter than her now lukewarm coffee. Flushed with anger, indignant about how presumptuous that man had been, she decided to get up and leave as well.

As she got up from the table, she took her magazine and put it into her shopping bag, where she discovered her unopened bag of cookies.

Many times in our lives, we are just like that exhausted lady in the mall. So often in life, when we dig into a “bag of cookies” assuming we paid for with our hard earned money, we later find out that the cookies we consumed were a gift from someone else—someone who didn’t seem to mind sharing with us!

On Mother’s Day it is customary (what a superb custom!) to remember all the literal and metaphorical cookies we have eaten from the bag of cookies our mothers produced and provided. It is wonderful that mothers are honored, with cards and flowers, on Mother’s Day.

If you are a mother, I hope and

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pray your children will honor you, today and every day—that they will call you and send you cards and flowers. But you are not my only focus in this article. Let's consider 1) our mothers and 2) our God.

We give thanks for grace we receive physically and grace we receive spiritually.

As we celebrate and honor our mothers, drawing from the story of the woman who discovered she was accidentally eating someone else's cookies, *it is far better not to expect others to honor us but to graciously give thanks for those who served and nurtured us.*

Martin Luther said that of all the images of Jesus Christ, his favorite was one Jesus gave of himself, as a mother hen protecting her chicks.

If you are a mother, this Mother's Day you might direct your attention away from how your children may or may not recognize you, and any disappointment you may experience.

Instead why not 1) *direct your thoughts toward your own mother.* And of course, all the rest of us, male and female, who are not birth mothers, are well-served in also directing our thoughts toward our own mother—whether she is alive or has passed away.

More importantly, 2) *give thanks to God for his "mother love"*—for his parental love—for his faithful, unfailing, no-matter-what love—for his matchless amazing grace.

Everything Comes From Someone Else

In the midst of a discussion of partisanship and self-interest, Paul posed a spiritually incisive question to the Corinthian Christians:

"What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

Apparently many in Corinth were infected with spiritual pride—boasting about their

talents and abilities—and proud of their affiliations with leading lights in the early Christian movement.

A spirit of pride—a party spirit—had overwhelmed the Corinthians. They were arguing about which Christian teacher was the best.

They were boasting of their presumed superior knowledge, filled with condescending contempt for those who were not just like them.

The Corinthians, to use a baseball analogy, "woke up" on third base and thought they had hit a triple. Instead of overtly telling the Corinthians how self-absorbed they were, Paul asked them a rhetorical question: "What do you have that you did not receive from another person or source?"

In the case of the woman at the food court, she assumed she was eating cookies she had purchased, and was upset that someone else was enjoying them. Turns out she was the one helping herself to cookies that belonged to another!

Each of us have received everything we have from God, and nothing we have (or appear to have) gives us any right to boast.

- Everything—*everything*—that any human has is a gift of God.
- Everything is of grace; nothing is deserved, nothing is earned, in the ultimate sense.
- Anything that we can ever do or have or produce or possess is based on a gift we originally received. We would be nothing apart from the gifts of God.
- Of course, life itself is a gift of God.



Understanding God's Love and Grace Through Our Mothers

As we give thanks today for our mothers, we give thanks to God, who after all, gave us our mothers. God determined that he would create us, bringing us into this world through another human whom we call our "mother."

Our human life is a gift of God, but God used our mothers to bring us into this world. We did not *earn, choose, nor did we deserve* to come out of our mother's womb (John 1:12-13).

We came out of the womb covered by the love and grace of our mother. We didn't come out potty trained, or knowing how to feed ourselves or how to walk and talk. We came out of our mother's womb in continuous need of our mother's care and nourishment.

Hopefully, our mothers cared for and nourished us without condition, and loved us no matter what we did in life. We understand much of God's love and grace through the love of our mothers. Mothers, after all, start loving us long before they ever see us.

Mothers love us throughout our lives no matter how we might behave, and no matter how we might forget to thank them for their love. In the best case:



A mother's love is like God's love... Whether the son or daughter winds up sitting in a chair as a doctor...or sitting in the electric chair...a mother's love continues.

A mother's love is like God's love, in that no matter where her child goes in life, mother love will continue, unabated.

Whether the son or daughter winds up sitting in a chair as a doctor, a lawyer or a senator—or

whether the son or daughter winds up in the electric chair—a mother's love continues.

I read a survey that asked parents how they would feel if their son or daughter murdered someone. Ninety-six percent of the mothers surveyed said that they would continue loving their son or daughter no matter what, while only fifty-seven percent of the fathers said the same thing.

If you are a parent, you know that there are no guarantees in parenting. We can do what we consider to be a wonderful job of parenting—we can train and care for and love and educate and prepare our children. Then, after all of our work in preparing them for life in this world, our children can and will make their own decisions in life.

The decisions our children make don't always seem to be based on the love and preparation we gave to them—for they aren't robots. They are living, breathing human beings, and they make their own choices.

If you are a parent, you know that children do not arrive in this world filled with gratitude. As they continue their lives, as they grow up, our children may never express gratitude and love equal to that which we convey and give to them.

Of course, as parents we don't love our children expecting a *quid pro quo* return from them—that is not the nature of parenting. And it's not the relationship we have with God either. He loves us no matter what.

Like the story of the woman eating from someone else's bag of cookies, all of us can carelessly assume that we deserve the blessings in life we enjoy because we are responsible for them.

Paul asks: "What do you have that you did not receive?" A good question for Mother's Day. Please give it some thought. □

- Mothers do not love us in return for our love.
- Mothers do not stop loving us if they feel we are not doing enough to show them our love.
- Mothers love their children unconditionally.
- Mothers love their children because they are hers, just as God loves us because we are his children.


There's an old story about an angel who was assisting God as he was finalizing all the plans for the creation of this universe. According to the story, God was working hard, burning the candle at both ends. The angel assisting God told him that he was working too hard and that he should go to bed and get some sleep.

God replied, "I can't. I'm so close to creating mothers who will be so much like myself."

Then the angel took a look at the sketch of a mother on God's heavenly drafting table. The angel ran her hands across the face of the model of the mother God was creating and said, "I feel a leak or something. What's this liquid on her face?"

God said, "It's not a leak, it's a tear. It's a tear of sadness, of pain and of disappointment—but most of all it's a tear of joy and happiness—it's a tear of a mother's love."

FAKE NEWS?



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