

PLAIN TRUTH®

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CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION®

Stretch Marks of a Mother's Love

By Greg Albrecht

The stages of motherhood, as seen from the eyes of her child:

Age 4: *My mommy can do anything.*

Age 8: *My mommy knows a lot.*

Age 14: *My mom doesn't know as much as she thinks she does.*

Age 18: *My mother is hopelessly old fashioned—she's way out-of-date.*

Age 30: *Before I make a big decision, I'm going to call my mom.*

Age 55: *She's gone now. I wonder what my mother would have done when she had this decision to make.*

Age 70: *She's been gone for a long time now. How I wish I could talk with my mom again and tell her how much I loved and appreciated her.*

Englishman John Wesley, one of the great patriarchs of the Protestant branch of Christianity, whose contributions and faith gave rise to what is known as Methodism today said this about his own mother: "I learned more about what Christianity is all about from my mother than all the theologians in England."

Mothers carry **stretch marks**, which, for the rest of their lives, are etched on their bodies as a memory of their stretching to accommodate and welcome a new life into the world!

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?

And that's truly a Christ-centered insight into the love of a mother—

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.

Another way of appreciating and more fully comprehending a mother's love is to think of it from the flip side—what we can learn from children as they are loved by their mothers.

Here's a passage from a book titled *The Course of Love*, by Alain de Botton:

Children teach us that love is, in its purest form, a kind of service. The word has grown freighted with negative connotations. An individualistic, self-gratifying culture cannot easily equate contentment with being at someone's call.

We are used to loving others in return for what they can do for us... Yet babies can do precisely nothing. There is, as slightly older children sometimes conclude... no "point" to them. That is their point.

They teach us to give without expecting anything in return, simply because they need help badly—for we are in a position to provide it. We are inducted into a love based not on an admiration for strength but on a compassion for weakness, a vulnerability common to every member of the species and one which has been and will eventually again be our own... these helpless creatures are here to remind us that no one is, in the end, "self-made": we are all heavily in someone's debt.

And finally the author concludes about the kind of love given so

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lavishly by mothers to their children and what it teaches:

We learn the relief and privilege of being granted something more important to live for than ourselves.

From a mother's perspective, **the decision to have a child is, as someone once said, like deciding forever to have your heart go walking around, exposed to the world, outside your body.**

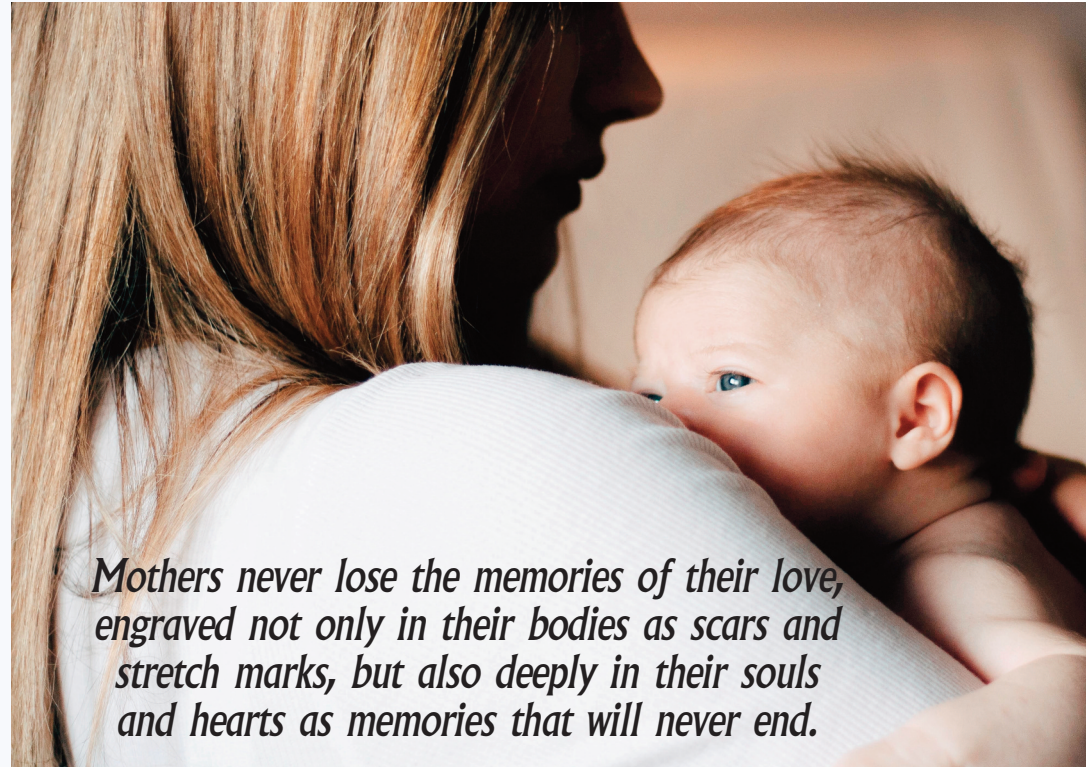
And of course, those **visible stretch marks** are the scars of sacrifice and the labor—the ordeal a mother's body endured as it made room not just for one life, but one more—and prepared that new body for a life of its own.

"This Too Shall Pass Away"

"This too shall pass away" was one of the sayings my mother loved. For my mother, when times were tough, and we had many of them, "this too shall pass away" was a reminder that no matter how hard and difficult and seemingly endless a particular task or project might be, one day it will be over and done with. And then in hindsight there will be relief, appreciation, and joy over a life well lived.

"This too shall pass away" was also meaningful for her in a more positive way, as she reminded herself to live in the moment, to cherish experiences and not to be in too much of a hurry to move on to the next chapter in her book of life. As a mother of adult children she looked back and realized a little three-year-old will only be three for 365 days, and then that three-year-old is gone, and a four-year-old takes his or her place.

My wife and I often recall those dirty diapers, or the British term "nappies," which both of our children wore as youngsters in the United Kingdom. Their odor permeated our flat or house, alerting anyone who walked through our front door that a baby was in residence. For us, that time has passed—**this too shall pass away.**



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

Those days when you couldn't wait for your child to start walking and talking—**they passed**, didn't they? The days when your baby was only able to crawl gave way to the days when your little child not only walked, but you had to watch them like a hawk as they started to fearlessly venture anywhere and everywhere.

Not long after children begin to talk, they enter the age of wonder—a fascinating place where they are continuously amazed, as each new day brings endless questions, many of them unanswerable—like:

Why is the sky blue?

Why is air invisible?

Why do trees have so many leaves?

Why do lions roar?

But those days quickly go by—**this too shall pass away**—and those days when you could not shut your child up pass and a decade or less later, when they are teenagers, you can hardly get them to say a word.

The days when a child is so completely dependent upon its mother and father—a time of such incredible work and sacrifice on the part of the mother (and the father)—**those days pass** and soon that same child desperately wants to do everything for themselves. They often even seem embarrassed to have you, their parent, around.

When they go to school, slowly but surely, the authority for life and the person relied on for wisdom and information moves away from you and toward teachers in school—and then the focus of right and wrong moves to rock stars and movie stars and to your children's friends and to social media. It's a humbling experience. You were once so important and now... not so much, it seems.

But we take comfort knowing that the temporary love affair with anyone and everyone other than parents—especially their mothers as the authority figure—**this too shall pass away.** It all will pass—so do not feel that you must endure the difficult times forever, and do not neglect to fully immerse yourself in the joy of the delightful and wonderful times.

You may have heard the story about the mother who was so upset because neither her adult son or daughter were coming home for Thanksgiving. She called her daughter and said:

"Honey, you don't have to worry about coming home for Thanksgiving. This old house won't be a very happy one by then anyway—in fact, your father may have moved out by then. You see, your father and I are getting a divorce."

The daughter was in shock: "Forty-

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five years of marriage and now you're getting a divorce? No Thanksgiving? I don't think so—I'm calling my brother right now—we're both going to be there for Thanksgiving with our families. Forget about the divorce." She hung up.

As she hung up the phone on her end, the mother looked at her husband and smiled: "Looks like we will have a great Thanksgiving after all—and to top it all off, I bet they will both pay for their airline tickets."

This too shall pass—but the stretch marks of a mother's love are forever reminders:

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

Stretch Marks of a Mother's Love

Mothers gain and lose pounds—mothers have scars and stretch marks, each one telling a story. Mothers lose elasticity of their skin

as they age—mothers (and fathers) lose hair, teeth and muscle tone.

But mothers never lose the memories of their love, engraved not only in their bodies as scars and stretch marks, but also deeply in their souls and hearts as memories that will never end. Two thoughts that may seem obvious, but they need to be said:

1) **As children, we must never forget to constantly thank our mothers**—for the things we know she did, and the MANY things we don't.

2) **And 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 your unconditional love—a mother's love—thank you for all that is grand, inspirational and majestic about a mother's love.

- Thank you for your love—thank you for **the stretch marks of a mother's love.** □

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