

# Mother

I admire women and their gifts. My wife and my mother continue to be some of the most influential people in my life, and I am amazed with their life-changing abilities.

My mother sacrificed a significant portion of her life for me. I'm eternally grateful. Now, as I watch my wife navigate the difficulties of motherhood, I'm slowly comprehending the important work that my own mother so selflessly poured into me. Did I mention that I have nine brothers? Mom belongs to an exclusive club. Not many women raised 10 boys.

Before I dive into the lessons my mother can teach us, can we take a wider view?

A woman personifies creativity, beauty, and nurture. Women provide a fundamentally critical role for any society: raising children. However, their value extends far past their critical role in reproduction. The feminine call to civility and morality tames the world. A society that realizes the pricelessness of women, builds its code of ethics around protecting and providing for them. This noble project pushes men to their best behavior and provides a stable platform for society.

Femininity is creative at its core. It transforms the physical into the spiritual. It turns houses into homes and brats into gentlemen. That's why the mundane tasks of a gentle mother live on as the best of memories for some of the most brazen men. Through a good mother, the most menial of tasks are transformed into spiritual rituals. This spiritual transformation that a woman is instrumental in providing should not be passed over lightly.

Let me give you two examples. First, a child deprived of his mother is greatly disadvantaged. I believe in the grace of God and that each child has an opportunity to flourish in God's eyes. However, neglect from a mother can add much unnecessary suffering. Similarly, a wife that dominates and disrespects her husband adds incalculable amounts of chaos into her home. Conversely, an unselfish wife that respects her husband reinforces the foundation of her home.

Feminine beauty is inherent and spiritual. What beauty surpasses the tender mother that shepherds her young charges through life's complexities? This beauty imbues the world with purpose and hope. It revitalizes aching backs and invigorates disillusioned hearts. Its loveliness consistently calls us higher and nobler. Intertwined in this creativity and beauty is the urge upward – the push for growth. The nurturing instinct is a call for greater maturity and can't be separated from the inherent creativity and beauty of femininity.

Have you confused femininity with the effeminate? Don't. They aren't the same. The feminine is not conjured. Femininity is a real property that cannot be pretended. It's not the whole thing but it's an integral part of the whole.

Anyway, I started by talking about my mother. It's tempting to confuse femininity with softness and passivity. However, that's not the case. The core of the truly feminine is wrapped in endurance, and Mom embodied this. Raising ten boys took a ton of work and lots of patience. We

hated to work but she kept us busy. We tested the moral boundaries, and she disciplined us. She hauled us to the beach and to the berry patch. She taught us how to care for goats and cows and chickens. She taught us how to bake and clean and do our homework.

But more than all these important things, Mom cared about us. She comforted our sorrows and soothed our fears. She listened to our stories and told us her own. She read endless stories (sometimes falling asleep in the middle of them). She nursed us through fevers and coughs and infections. And always, she pointed us to God. Mom went through hard times raising us and this could have destroyed her. Instead, she prayed and leaned on God and allowed these times of testing to deepen her faith. Mom loved God passionately. She willingly sacrificed herself for God and called us to do the same.

She loved the Bible and studied it voraciously. She wrote articles, headed up Bible studies, and pitched in during family worship. At the same time, she took 1 Timothy 2:9-15 seriously: *“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”* And she did a wonderful job modeling these verses. She wasn't a pushover. She had her own opinions regarding Bible interpretation and loved discussing these things with Dad. But, at the end of the day, she respected Dad and his decisions. I never questioned that Dad was the head of our home.

My mother is not a feminist. What is odd to me is that the people who claim to love diversity often push women into the same role as a man. They don't acknowledge that women and men are called to different responsibilities. The concept that women should go to work and try to fulfill a man's role is counterproductive. Of all the movements that have undermined society and led to pain and suffering, the feminist movement is near the top of the list. The number of children who have suffered without a kind mother to care for them is astounding and feminism has played a key role in this tragedy.

Recently, my wife and I were waiting on our flight in the Denver airport when an attractive young woman sat down across from us. She was evidently delayed like us and placed a call to her significant other. She asked a favor of him on behalf of their son, and he obviously declined. This quickly devolved into a crude, mud-slinging contest. I could only hear one side of the conversation, but, according to her, the man on the other end of the line was worthless and shameful. She kept up a harsh tirade while on the phone but as soon as she disconnected, she burst into tears.

I could have cried myself. It was an appalling situation with everyone sharing plenty of blame. But I found myself wondering, “What if this young woman had been raised by my mother? What if she had learned the critical role God has called her to? What if she learned modesty, deference, and the power of feminine winsomeness?” Her request was simple. With a little coaxing, self-deprecating humor, and winsomeness, she probably could have persuaded the man

on the other end of the phone to humor her. How many Biblical principles had feminism broken for this young woman? And how tragic the results!

I'm grateful that my mother is not a feminist. She is a talented woman and I'm sure she could have excelled in many other things besides raising children. However, I believe that her work in raising us was far more important than any corporate job. Her beauty, creativity, and nurture filled a role that Dad (or any other person) could never quite fulfill. I pray that mothers everywhere realize the importance of their work and fulfill their critical, feminine role that children need so desperately.

~Caleb Martin