

# Mother's Day –

## Reflecting a Life of Faith and Trust in God

By Alberta Ecker

As the mother of five children (3 sons and 2 daughters), and 7 grandchildren (2 grandsons and 5 granddaughters) and 1 great-grandson, I have somewhat to say on this Mother's Day on the subject of what it means to be a Mother, Grandmother and Great-grandmother of faith and trust in God. First of all, I love being a mother. Secondly, even though my children have long since grown up and have established their own lives in their own homes, I remember with great fondness the years I spent rearing them. Even though they and their families live from 24 miles to 2400 miles away I don't worry and fret over my children or my grandchildren or great-grandchild because **I know** deeply and with certainty that they are each one deeply and forever loved by God. **I know** that the One and only True God, God Almighty, is their Heavenly Father, and I rest in the knowledge that he takes precedence over my parenting skills (such as they are) and motherly position, **I know** Jesus is their Creator Savior, he is the author and finisher of his faithful work for them, and **I know** they are ever and always under the watchful care and guidance of God the Holy Spirit. All of these affirmations of faith and trust are easily said because of the truth that they affirm in me but it took years of Bible Study and daily prayers and supplications to be able to rest in these words.

I'll share a personal story with you to help you understand why I don't worry and fret about my children or the following generations. It's all about knowing and living in God's love. Many years ago when my youngest son, Eugene, was in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade he came to me one day and wanted to know the answer to a very important question, "Does God love me, mama? Does God love me as much as you love me?" I immediately recognized this as one of those rare and profound moments in the life of a parent-child relationship that would never come again, and this question was so important to my son that it would need the inspiration of God to give an adequate answer. Instantly an answer flashed through my mind, which will take quite a while to explain, but here goes.

I think in pictures and I knew that Eugene does also, so I knew that if I answered his question with a "picture this" story he would get the picture. I was attending college at the time and I was studying and doing homework when Eugene came and asked me this question. I always had a glass of water near by when I was studying. So I said, "Eugene, you know I have

this big water glass that I use to drink water, and ever so often I go to the kitchen and refill it. Let's suppose this water glass is me and the water inside is how much I love you. I could see in his face that he understood my analogy. Since the water glass is me and the water inside is how much I love you, I would have to take this glass into the kitchen and put it in the sink and start to fill it up. I would have to fill and fill this glass all the way up to the very top it would be so full that it could not hold any more water in fact it would just have to overflow. I illustrated this by moving my hand up the outside of the glass and then flopping it over to demonstrate the water overflowing the glass. Then I said, now you know how much I love you, I am just completely filled with love for you, so much love that it just pours out of me, that's why I hug you and kiss you and take care of you every day. I gave him a big hug as I said this. Then I went on to say with great emphasis, you know how much I love you. Now let me tell you how much God loves you.

For the next part of this illustration I talked about our airplane trip from Germany back to the United States. This trip had taken place a few years previously but I knew Eugene would still remember it. My five children and I were on that flight, it was a flight that went from daylight to dark across the Atlantic. So I said, remember when we flew in that airplane coming back to America from Germany? Eugene shook his head yes. Remember how long it was and you started to ask me how long were we going to be in the airplane, and when were we going to see America. My oldest son had a window seat so I had Eugene stand in front of him and look out the window. I pointed out the vast ocean spread out below us as far as the eye could see in any direction. I reminded him of his look out the window and how I had explained that when we saw lights down below us instead of the water that was when we would be seeing America. He remembered the many hours it took to cross the ocean and the many times he looked out the window only to see that expanse of water. So then I said, Gene, how many glasses of water would it take to hold that entire ocean? His eyes got big and he looked up to the ceiling and said, "Lots." So I said, that's more glasses of water than I could ever count, and that's more glasses of water than you could ever count. That ocean of water that we flew over for hour after hour is how much God loves you. He's much, much bigger than mama, so his love for you is much, much bigger. I could see in his face a sense of great joy and understanding that God loved him so greatly.

So you see why I don't fret or worry about my offspring. God's promises (as Peter said on the Day of Pentecost) are to me and to my children and I've always shared those promises with them. I do continue to pray for them daily and I continue to make the Word of God, the Bible, my personal means

by which I remain in a close relationship with God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Now let's go on to find some Biblical examples of Mothers and Grandmothers.

One day four ministers stood talking and, as so often happens, the conversation soon drifted to shop talk, a discussion about the Bible. "I prefer the *King James Version* of Scripture," said one, "for its eloquent use of the English language." A second minister gave forth that no Bible could match the *New American Standard* for its faithfulness to the original Greek and Hebrew text. "That may well be," said the third, "but I prefer the *New International Version* for its contemporary language and easy readability." There was a thoughtful period of silence, and then the fourth minister said, "I like my mother's translation best." It was with some surprise that the others said: "We didn't know that your mother had translated the Bible." "Yes, she did," he replied. "She translated it into her daily life, and it was through her translation that I came to faith."

**Isn't that a picture of the best translation of the Bible?** How many Mother's and Grandmother's and sisters and daughters have lived the kind of faithful life that is a daily translation of the Bible? The Bible is filled with such women, and the past centuries of the Christian era have witnessed to such women in countless numbers. A woman doesn't have to be a mother to translate the Bible into her daily life of faith and trust in God, we need to be very clear about that. But when Mother's and Grandmother's translate the Bible into their life by living and sharing their faith with their children and grandchildren, how greatly blessed is the next generation, how greatly blessed are the Mother's and Grandmothers.

Today let's consider a few of these women whose faith and trust in God can be written and translated into our lives. Let's first go to the only place in scripture where the word "**Grandmother**" is found.

**2 Timothy 1:3-5 NIV** <sup>3</sup> *I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.* <sup>4</sup> *Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.* <sup>5</sup> *I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your **grandmother** Lois and in your **mother** Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.*

**On this Mother's Day**, it is fitting that we remember these two mothers: Lois, who was the grandmother of Timothy, and Eunice, Timothy's mother. The heritage these two women gave to their grandson and son was that they loved him deeply enough to give him their most precious possession: the gift of faith.

**Paul mentions Timothy as co-sender of six of his letters.** So confident was Paul of Timothy's faith that, in his first letter to Timothy, he called Timothy "my true son in the faith."

***1 Timothy 1:2 NIV*** ***2 To Timothy my true son in the faith:***  
*Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Timothy became for Paul -- the inheritor of Paul's mission. In Paul's final letter to Timothy, written near the end of Paul's life, he speaks without reserve, calling Timothy "my dear son" for Timothy was truly part of Paul's spiritual lineage, one who would carry on the faithful spreading of the gospel.

***2 Timothy 1:2 NIV*** ***2 To Timothy, my dear son:*** *Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**We know Timothy's real father was Greek and his mother a Jewish Christian.** Let's not assume that Timothy's Greek father was totally opposed to allowing his Jewish-Christian wife to teach Timothy in her tradition and in Christianity. I've known men in the church who faithfully came to church with their wives and were pleasant and hospitable but were never baptized. My own first husband wanted our children to be reared in the church and taught about God. But, as he said, I would have to be the one to teach and instruct them. I gladly did that; before, during and after our divorce. But all these men missed out on a lot; they were not like Paul who mentored Timothy and built him up further in his faith along with his mother and grandmother.

Paul, who was never married, found in Timothy a "descendant," someone who would carry on the "family name" -- so to speak -- someone so identical in faith that the force of Timothy's work for Christ would always complement that of his mentor, teacher and surrogate father: Paul. God gave Timothy the spiritual father that he needed, which was Paul. Paul was pleased to fill this spiritual role for Timothy.

In speaking about the faith of Timothy's grandmother and mother, Paul said in essence: "Timothy, I know your grandmother, and her faith is authentic. It is the same authentic faith I have observed in your mother, and after having watched you all this time I am convinced of your faith also." To describe that faith as "authentic," Paul used a word which means literally, "without hypocrisy." Lois and Eunice showed Timothy by word and example what it means to live an authentic faith; a faith from which hypocrisy is totally absent, the real thing, genuine and sincere. What higher accolade or greater tribute could be given any mother or grandmother on this Mother's Day than to say: You gave me authentic faith! Mothers and grandmothers have the awesome Joy of transmitting hope and faith from generation to generation.

**Timothy's every day was molded by his grandmother and mother.**

Paul reminds Timothy that the sincere faith transmitted to him by his mother and grandmother had given him a stable foundation which would guarantee his success. Paul also reminds Timothy that he has within him a gift -- the spirit of power, of love and self-control. Where do children learn about the Spirit's power, or the power of love, or the power of self-control? Ultimately God steps in to give us the understanding that we need if we did not receive it from our mothers. But, think for a moment what we learned from our own mothers. Was it not they who taught us what it means to be a loving person, or what it means to be loved? Whether their love was freely given or poorly given we still learned something about love.

**Here is an interesting bit of trivia:** William Frederick Dunkle Jr. has pointed out that "of the 69 kings of France only three were really loved by their subjects and that these were the only ones reared by their mothers instead of by tutors or guardians. Whatever ability most of us have to make others love us is largely due to the love our mothers put in and around our lives."

**How did Eunice and Lois prepare Timothy to exercise self-control,** how did they instill the kind of self-confidence that allows one to love and be loved? Paul reminds Timothy that they did this by making known to him the Holy Scriptures from the time of his infancy.

***2 Timothy 3:15 NIV*** <sup>15</sup> *and how from **infancy** you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

They knew that Scripture is God's powerful tool to influence lives for good. How powerful is the teaching of scripture in the lives of our children and grandchildren? Note again what Paul said to Timothy:

**2 Timothy 3:12-15 NIV** *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,<sup>13</sup> while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.<sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,<sup>15</sup> and how from **infancy** you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

**Another way of reading it:** *"Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from **childhood** you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"*

Paul recognized that Timothy, from a young age, had been grounded in upright living by his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois. As I said before, the word "grandmother" is found in the Bible only in this one place. Eunice and Lois are mentioned only here, in the fifth verse of Paul's letter. Everything we know about these two women is contained in one verse, but that one verse is a living memorial to mothers and grandmothers. The example of these women will endure to instruct and inspire us until the Lord returns.

**Let's look at other aspects of motherhood that we can derive from the scriptures.**

## **1) Motherhood and the Lordship of Jesus**

Let us think about motherhood in the way that God intended, which is under the Lordship of Jesus. We Christians along with society have made it tough for the women to be effective mothers. Aside from blaming mothers for all the emotional quirks of their offspring, we have often set up an impossible emotional picture of the role of mothers. We continually try to pour each woman into this idealistic, perfect mold. Yet no woman is perfect, no mother is perfect, any more than any man or any father is perfect. That which makes a woman a successful mother is not how comfortable she is with the idealism of a Mother's Day card image, but rather does she have her own sense of personhood, of personal worth, of being loved, of being in God's will in the matter of motherhood as in all other areas of her life. The way for any woman to be the kind of fulfilled, and fulfilling mother that God intends, is to let Jesus be the Lord of every area of her life. I certainly made

my share of mistakes in rearing my children, that's why my prayer is always, "Dear Heavenly Father, with your love and your parenting skills fill in the gaps and holes of my sincere efforts as a mother, and mend any shredded edges of my relationship with my children." God has done this and is continuing to do this; those gaps, holes and shredded edges can take years to mend.

## 2) The Motherly Character of God

We easily speak of God the Father, and readily confess that most fathers are poor reflections of the fatherly nature of God. In the light of Jesus' claim of Lordship in our life, to those of us who are mothers, we need to raise the question: Are we an effective reflection of the motherly character of God? No, I am not calling God she or Mother God or anything of the sort. What I want to do though is give some acknowledgement to the motherly attributes that scripture reveals of the character of God that we say so little about.

This was not always the case. The motherly attributes of God were a strong theme in the writings of the Church fathers and the medieval churchmen. We find it in the works of Augustine, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Anselm and others. One scholar, Richard Stauffer, has pointed out recently that Martin Luther's favorite image of Christ was that of the mother hen protecting her chicks. But even more important than the way these great Christian thinkers saw the character of God is what the Bible teaches us of the motherly character of God.

**Genesis 1:27 NIV** <sup>27</sup> *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; **male and female** he created them.*

So in **Genesis 1:27** we are told that God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. This is simply saying that both men and women are made in the image of God, and that the unique positive qualities of women are qualities of the character of God as well as the manly qualities we readily attribute to God.

**Now, what are some of the positive qualities of motherhood?** I think immediately of the word **security**. When I was in college I would always do my best to make it home from my classes before my children came home from school. The few times that I knew I had to be a little late I would let them know ahead of time. Even when those few times happened I remember the look of utter relief that would cross their faces the moment I walked in the door. I hated to not be there when they came home from school because I knew my presence gave them a great sense of

security. Mother means security and their presence does surround their children with security.

**Mothers also bring comfort and healing to the family.** When my children were not feeling well or when they would fall and skin a knee, they always looked to me for comfort and healing. They knew I would take care of them whether they had a bad cold or just a scraped up knee. They knew they would be hugged and kissed through whatever discomfort they were having. I trusted God to heal them in all their illnesses but I knew they looked to me for comfort and assurance.

Mothers not only bring security, and comfort and healing to the family; **mothers bring a sense of belief in the child.** Godly Mothers faithfully stand fast through the hard years, they continue to smile and hug and kiss their children even through the most difficult sacrifices. Mothers sacrifice for their children, and do it gladly. Through it all they keep the faith and teach the faith. It seems mothers are always giving and pouring their lives into their children.

**We can see many of these qualities in the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus.** Mary accepts, when only a young girl, the strange news of motherhood. We can see these qualities when she makes the journey not just to Bethlehem, not to a sterilized hospital room but to a stable. We see that motherly protection as she flees to Egypt; we see her standing by Jesus in Cana as he performs his first miracle. And we see her broken-hearted love as she watches Jesus die on the cross. Those qualities, the highest qualities of motherhood -- security, protection, healing, and belief in the child, sacrifice, and even discipline -- are motherly qualities women have because they are created in the image of God.

**Let's look at other scriptures in the Bible where God is not hesitant to liken himself to motherly characteristics:**

**Deuteronomy 32:11-12.** Where Moses says in part about God's work with His people, this is in the **KJV**. *"As an eagle stirreth up **her** nest, fluttereth over **her** young, spreadeth abroad **her** wings, taketh them, beareth them on **her** wings: so the Lord did lead him ..."* God, like a mother, disciplines us, teaches us, pushes us out into the world to use our wings. Some call it tough love; I expect it was as tough on the mother eagle as on the eaglet; as hard on the mother as on the child, and not a joyful task for God, either. God pictures himself here as the mother eagle.

**Matthew 23:37.** In the **KJV**, this is the image in which Jesus likens himself to a mother hen. Most of us who are adults have seen a mother hen clucking and the chicks running to gather under her wings for safety and protection. **In this verse as Jesus is approaching Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, he fastens His eyes upon the Holy City,**

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth **her** chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"*

**Jesus is saying,** "I have the kind of **motherly love** for you that a mother hen has for her chicks; I would have gathered you to me, under the protection of my wings; but you would not respond to my call!"

**Psalm 91:4 KJV** *"He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler."*

Let us put this image of the **mothering character of God into our hearts**, and run to the shelter of His wings when our hearts are fearful, when the burden is heavy, and when He calls us to flee from dangers unknown to us. Let's always turn to his truth, which the Bible, and find the comfort and strength that we need in these difficult times.

In **Isaiah 66:13 KJV** we find a motherly promise of God: *"As one whom his **mother** comforteth, so will I comfort you."* It is the promise of our God; He will comfort us as a loving mother comforts her children, when our hearts are fearful of many things. Like a mother He will disperse the dark fear with a word because he knows so much more than we, and knows there is nothing to fear in His love. So it is that God loves us with a mother's love, weeps with us with a mother's sorrow, comforts us as a mother, when all other helpers fail and comforts flee.

**So the lesson is that God is like a mother.** Yes, in a sense. **But more correctly, a woman, created in the image of God, who is a godly mother, is simply reflecting the character of God.** The lesson is that every mother ought to be a mother who acts, as nearly as possible, toward her children like God acts toward us, because her finest motherly qualities are an extension of the character of God. Yet, no mother, in her own strength, can reflect the motherly qualities of God as she ought; no mother, in her own strength, can be the redeeming force in her child's life that she ought to be, without a holy and sanctified relationship to God herself.

**So as mothers and/or Godly women:** let's be certain that Jesus is the Lord of our life! Let's all go on to receive and experience the motherly love of God, strong, deep, and sacrificial. Let's **live** our lives daily in the presence of God, **enjoying** his presence through prayer and reading our Bible, **meditating** on, **reflecting** on, and **applying** the wonderful traits of God in our life.

**HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY**