

For a long time, motherhood held no appeal to me.

Growing up in the '70s didn't help. Listening to Helen Reddy sing "I Am Woman," eagerly embracing the Women's Liberation movement, and calculating the earliest date I could run for presidential office, I assumed I was destined for greater things.



Lori Hatcher

As a selfish teenager, I remember noticing that my mom wore the same winter coat year after year. Inevitably either I or one of my sisters had outgrown last year's coat and needed a new one, so when the time came to shop, Mom unselfishly put us first. I instinctively knew moms were supposed to sacrifice and decided if motherhood meant doing without, I never wanted to be a mom.

Even after I became a believer and began to glimpse the high calling of motherhood, I had serious doubts about my own ability to be a good mother. As a teenager, I had hated babysitting, had no desire to hold others' children, and would rather clean bathrooms than serve in the church nursery. I feared I was without natural affection.

When I became pregnant with our first daughter, I gathered up enough courage to ask a seasoned mother of five the question that haunted my nights and nipped at the edges of my days. "What if I don't love my child?"

"Oh, honey," she responded with a reassuring pat, "God wouldn't give you a baby without giving you a love for it."

Her words were wise and true. When I held my daughter for the first time, I knew instantly that not only did I love her, I would die for her.

God knew I would need extra fortification for the months of colic, sleep problems, and separation anxiety that followed. My second daughter had chronic ear infections for the first nine months of her life. On nights when she was particularly fretful, my husband would awaken to discover me missing and the baby gone from her crib. He would find us in the rocking chair—my daughter sleeping peacefully on my chest and me with silent tears of exhaustion rolling down my cheeks. While I didn't enjoy those nights, being able to alleviate her pain made them worth the dark circles under my eyes and the crick in my neck. Sacrifice was what mothers did, and I was a mother now.

As I matured maternally and spiritually, God began to show me a parallel between my relationship with my daughters and His relationship with me. As I experienced unconditional love for my children, I

began to understand God's unconditional love for me. As I protected my daughters from harm, trained them to make good decisions, and provided for their needs, I got glimpses of how God wanted to protect, train, and provide for me. As my relationship with my daughters grew, I sensed how much pleasure God experienced as my relationship with Him grew.

When my daughters disobeyed me, and I struggled with disappointment, hurt, and the frustration of trying to convey to them that rules were there to make their lives richer, not spoil their fun, I'd hear God's voice whispering the same words to me.

Author Elizabeth Stone describes motherhood this way: "Making the decision to have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body."

I wonder if this is the way God feels about me.

In this month's issue of *Reach Out, Columbia*, we are privileged to peer into two mothers' hearts. Author and speaker Carol Kent shares how God carried her through some of the darkest days a mother can experience. Dawn Gonzalez allows us to sit around her dinner table, laugh with her children, and be reminded of how quickly our baby birds grow wings and fly.

As you take time this month to honor women who have mothered you, related or unrelated, I encourage you to embrace God's view of the high calling of motherhood. Two thousand years ago, He thought so much of one young mother that He entrusted His only Son into her care.

"But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High" (Luke 1:30-32).

Happy Mother's Day,

Lori

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what we're all about

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