



For Women Only!

April 2008, Issue 43

Mother's Reminders of Truth

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

Matthew 6:20



One unchangeable truth is that change is inevitable. I'm powerfully reminded of this when viewing my mother's drop-dead gorgeous image in old family photos compared to the current frail form sitting before me in a wheelchair. When I enter her room in the assisted living facility, a moment passes before recognition brightens her face. She smiles and greets me in her usual manner, "Oh hi, Mary."

A peculiar stage in life has arrived after functioning so long as my mother's daughter. Our relationship has turned a strange corner where the roles have switched, a phenomenon I've understood and observed happening to others. No longer young daughters to older and wiser moms, women assume responsibility for the care of their dependent mothers. I believe Erma Bombeck called it "the time when the mother becomes the daughter."

Witnessing the decline of my mother, I've expected this. In recent years she lived alone, denying her physical and mental weaknesses, refusing needed help from the family. She lived in an isolated world with no boundaries between dementia and reality. Then came an accident, the fall in her garage that exposed her frailty and ripped her world apart. Now she's as helpless as a child and dependent upon us, her children.

But I'm reminded that God works all things together for good for those who love Him. The light of hope emerges from dark tragedies, including this one. Historically, the relationship between my mother and me hasn't exactly been warm and fuzzy. Hugs were scarce, and pride choked the words, "I love you," from both our lips. This nagged me for years, yet it continued. But this recent change in her situation has in turn changed me. Now I'll hug her, hold her hand and even tell her, "I love you." In response her face lights up with delight, and usually she'll say, "I love you" right back. Regardless, I'm grateful to be free from an old, frosty stumbling block that for decades froze off affection between us.

So I'm also reminded to give thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Moreover, I shouldn't forget that my mother was the spiritual foundation of our family. She introduced me to my Savior Jesus Christ and I'll always be grateful for that. In contrast, the once-new, now-dusty collections in her house show how quickly material things fade, and how futile it is to emotionally cling to physical objects. But though her tarnished mementos are fleeting like vapor, her spiritual legacy remains, reminding me how valuable a gift it was. This is what endures, and by far it was the best thing she ever gave me.

Thus, I'm further reminded that the best we give others can't be corruptible material objects but incorruptible spiritual treasures entrusted to us from God. And because now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2), I'm admonished against putting off until tomorrow the good we can do today. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow is always a day off, but today holds the opportunity for each of us to lay up imperishable treasures and build our own spiritual legacy.

Like all of us, my mother's life embodies a blend of good decisions and bad. Observing her self-neglecting behavior these past years, I hope not to replicate it in my own life later on. But I must remember that her decline is merely a symptom of the same problem all have faced since the day after God forewarned, "When you eat the fruit you will die (Genesis 2:17)." Because of sin, every person confronts both spiritual and physical death. So Jesus stepped out of eternity to die for mankind, and sacrificed His perfect life for our sinful one. Therefore, the problem of spiritual death is solved for those who receive His gift of salvation.

But physical death still lies ahead. There's no escaping this, no matter how wisely we live. We're all weak vessels that are crumbling, that will someday cease. Yet physical death is also conquered because God's very life indwells these frail earthly bodies. Conceived in the heart and mind of our Creator before the world was formed, we who have received His life are eternal beings headed for eternity in heaven. In that glorious place, death has no home, for God has put to death such things as sickness, pain and sorrow.

Still, for life on earth there are seasons for every purpose (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Just as the world keeps turning, no person remains in one season forever, and the cycle of life continues as it has throughout the ages. Passing from season to season, the relationships between mothers and daughters inevitably change, as it has between me and my mother, my mother and her mother, and every daughter and mother in their respective generation since Eve bore her first female offspring.

Though life's changes are unavoidable, hope need never be afar. My mother's accident was an unwelcome event, from which came welcome blessings. It has drawn my family closer together, for one thing. But am I surprised by God's goodness? Still, though the times and seasons of our earthly lives change, the object of our faith will not. Therefore, we can be encouraged because the God we worship is unchangeable, and His Word, our hope, abides forever.

- By Mary Nixon