

Parson to Person

Mother's Day 2023

Every year as Mother's Day rolls around, I experience many diverse emotions. I am reminded of the fact that my own mother died in 1968 when I was still pretty young at the age of 8 and have only a few memories of her. My dad was a traveling salesman and away quite a bit, and therefore my early childhood was a mix of live-in housekeepers and nannies who did their best to take on the responsibilities of helping raise my sister and me. My grandmothers on both sides died very early, and I never knew my grandfathers—both died before I was born.

Family life was not something I remember experiencing until my dad remarried when I was 12 years of age and that was (as much as I love my step mom now) difficult for me as it felt that a stranger had moved in and was then trying to take charge of an early teen. Need I say more?

Brenda had a rough childhood with a dad who was a professing believer—but abusive in ways I can't put in print. Her mom was a beaten and broken woman who battled understandable depression and only found some relief when her husband abandoned her, Brenda, and her three siblings. It was a relief. A sad commentary indeed.

Brenda and I married when we were too young to know anything about life (ages 18 and 19), and by the ages of 19 and 20, Brenda and I really came to know the Lord and began a journey of our own. We knew nothing about raising a family but nonetheless began to ask the Lord for children.

Four years passed before our son Paul was born, and inasmuch as Brenda sought the Lord for a baby every month, Mother's Day

was of particular pain to her as she wondered if she would ever become a mother. Herein I return to the joys and sorrows—both surfacing around Mother’s Day.

We now have four children who were raised in a Christian but insufficiently equipped home. Neither Brenda nor I knew much of proper parenting. With my newly forming Christian faith and pastoral calling, I was not at all the kind of father nor husband I wish I had been. Even then, Brenda was fixed on being the best parent and wife she could be, but my poor, distracted, and immature Christian faith (even as a young pastor—I began ministry at age 23) left me poorly equipped and at times resistant to what would have been best for our children’s developing years.

The good news is that all of our children were raised in the home of a consistent loving environment under the fatherhood of an unfaltering pastoral/Christian testimony. This does not suggest perfection (as if I need to say that), but both Brenda and I celebrate the fact that God has been merciful to us and that our now 44-year-long marriage demonstrates that God is able to use the worst—even us!

All of our children are professing believers but nevertheless, like Brenda and me, struggle imperfectly with all life throws our way. We still pray for them daily. Moreover, we have 9 grandchildren and trust the Lord for their growth in the truth. Our oldest daughter has not spoken to us for about 3 years for reasons we can’t understand; our other children are local, and we continue to watch and pray as they navigate life. We love them all—kids and grandkids alike.

Why, you ask, am I sharing this? Well, because Mother’s Day and Father’s Day prove bittersweet for us, and I am sure the same

is true for most of you. That said, we celebrate moms and dads (moms in particular today) but with tenderness to those who (like us) have bittersweet days—or even years. We are tender on behalf of those who want or have wanted children but have none. We are tender with those who have lost children (or grandchildren), those who struggle in parenting, etc. This is a day of emotion—good and bad! We are not unaware—and neither is the Lord.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul

Mother's Day Blessings

To those who are pregnant with new life—expected or surprised—we celebrate with you.

To those who celebrated a child this year—we rejoice with you.

To those who serve their kids each day—we appreciate you.

To women in waiting—we wait with you.

To those who walk the path of childlessness, tears, and disappointment—we hurt with you.

To those who've lost a child this year—we mourn with you.

To those who've adopted a child in need—we bless you.

To those who foster children, mentor kids, and invest in the spiritual lives of God's little blessings—we serve with you.

To those who have warm and healthy relations with your children—we celebrate with you.

To those who have disappointment, heartache, or distance—we weep with you.

To those who've lost a mother—we mourn with you.

To those who parent the children of a spouse—we support and commend you.

We celebrate the life and blessings of a Holy God. Whatever your circumstance—be it good or *what we perceive as bad*—we trust the Lord with you.

This Mother's Day, we send our deepest love—to mothers, those in waiting, grandmothers, great-grandmothers—to all.

We love you, appreciate you, and ask God's best upon you.

In Jesus' name. Amen.