



Mother's Day 2017

The Heart of a Mom

Joe White

So, I feel pretty certain that when God wrote the word *Mom*, whether it was Hebrew or Greek or Latin or whatever language it happened to be in in any Bible, in any time around the world, I believe it was the most important three-letter word he ever wrote. To think that God himself – this is a stunning thought – would take his son and place his son in the womb, in the heart of a mom, where that boy would hear his first words from his mom. He'd see his first smile, he'd cry his first tear, he'd take his first step into the hands of his mom. He would fall for the first time and be picked up by his mom. He would hear his first word of encouragement and his first "I love you" from the lips of his mom. Mommies at Woodland Hills, this is for you. [Song performance – Mary Did You Know?] I'm certain if that girl was on the voice, Blake Shelton would cry. One of the most beautiful voices in Branson and perhaps the world – Lane Ossick. Thank you, Lane.

I wish you would have known my mom. For some of us today, it's a bittersweet day, isn't it? For some of you older men and women, our moms aren't here to say Happy Mother's Day to, but I'm saying Happy Mother's Day anyway to your mom and my mom. For some of us, there's an empty place in our heart today. For some of us, the umbilical cord was cut, for me 68 years ago, but they never cut the strings to your heart, do they? I walked by Mom's little cemetery yesterday. As I looked over to the precious little place where she lays to rest... Now her soul is with Jesus, her body awaiting the great rapture day. I thought about the smile of a mom. The shadow of a smile, moms, never leaves your son or your daughter even though they may leave or you may leave. But the shadow of your smile always prevails.

My mom had the gift of hospitality, just like you do. My mom had the gift of kindness, often unnoticed, often overlooked. I know that. It's the most skilled position in the world, the most valued position ever taken by anyone. It's the most blessed position, the most loved, often times not noticed. But, I want you to know my mom. I was her favorite, by the way. And you know what? If you talk to my brother, Bill, he would say he is her favorite and Bob would say he's her favorite. Then along comes Debbie Jo and Debbie Jo is her favorite. And then the grandkids came along and they are her favorite. Meet my mom and Happy Mother's Day to her and Happy Mother's Day to all moms, wherever yours is today. Happy Mother's Day, mom; you're three times the lady. [Video presentation plays]

Tony Bennet used to sing *The Shadow of Your Smile*. "When you're gone, a tear drop kissed your lips to light the dawn." Happy Mommy's Day to all moms everywhere on earth and heaven. Moms, you're a marvelous creation.

I remember when Debbie Jo, who I was already head over heels for, was already smash hit madly in love with, brought little Jamie home from the hospital, on our second anniversary. I'll never forget looking at Debbie Jo in a different way. After she became a mom, my admiration soared. My awe and amazement for this wonderful person called Mom showed up in my life.

God says he knew you in Jeremiah 1: 5. Mommy, before you were formed, God knew you. In Ephesians 2: 10, Mom, he says you're his poem. We call it workmanship in our scripture, but the word is *poiema*. It's a Greek word. It means you're God's poetry. Isn't that neat? The neat thing about you being his poem is wherever you are today, it doesn't always rhyme, does it, moms? I know from admiring moms in my life that it doesn't rhyme many days, does it, Mom? Sometimes, you're in the middle of a stanza and there's no... But the rhyme is coming. It's going to be there. The rhyme will be there. It's the one day that irresponsible son of yours stands up when he's old and says, "I wish you would have met my mom," that it begins to rhyme.

You're marvelously made it says in the Psalms in 139. The scripture says that God formed your inmost parts. He wove you in your mother's womb. It says his thoughts are so precious of you, speaking of your Father in heaven here, that if he were to count those thoughts, they would outnumber the sand. Maybe your family is not appreciating you as you deserve to be appreciated, but he is. It took him six days to create the cosmos. By the way, as a long-term biologist, I will argue that with anybody from science. It took him six yom to build the whole universe. He could have done it in six nanoseconds if he would have wanted to, by the way. But, it took him nine months to make you. He was up to something special, wasn't he?

You're marvelously loved. I know this just watching Debbie Jo, my little bride, wonderful mom, phenomenal grandmom, and I remember when Jamie came into her world, she loved her with her whole heart, as did I. But, the neat thing about a mom's heart is it's elastic. And then along came precious Courtney. Oh my, Debbie Jo and I loved her with our whole heart and still do. Your heart doubles. And then along came Brady. Oh my, we loved him with our whole heart; it tripled. And then came Cooper and Debbie Jo warned me at that time that one more pregnancy meant one more wife, so stop that. So, that was the caboose. And we loved him with our whole heart.

Your heart stretches and I will just tell you, as a dad... I think it's good that there's an older grandpa up here today because a lot of you mommies have not really had that voice in your life. Let me be the voice of your grandpa, let me be the voice of your dad that never said this to you. Most importantly, let me just echo the voice of the one who really matters in your life. When He was on the cross, He had your name on his lips. I know He did, because Jamie and Courtney's names are on my lips and on my heart and in my eyes pretty much all the time. That's the way a daddy is. When He was being your dad up there, when He was becoming your dad, He was thinking about you. That's why He did it for six hours.

You're marvelously loved and, moms, you're marvelously gifted. There's not a mom I've ever met... I've met moms all over the world and I've never met a mom who wasn't marvelously gifted like a snowflake. You're so humble by nature.

I remember my mom had a sign over the sink in our humble little south Texas house. It said, "The best way for a mom to get some time alone is to stand in front of the sink, washing the dishes." Even there, you're marvelously gifted.

If you would have seen my grandmom in Branson... she was in Branson for years. You probably wouldn't even have noticed her. You would say, "Certainly, she not a significant person." When she was 95, she'd say, "Oh, to be 90 again." When she was 99, we were fishing. She would paddle her boat across the lake or maybe if the little motor was working, she would come across Lake Taneycommo each morning at dawn and she would climb the 85-ft cliff all by herself into our camp where the dining hall was. She would slip around camp and cut wild flowers for every table in the dining hall. No one noticed. I did. When the campers came for breakfast each day, there was a bouquet of wild flowers on each table. She'd call me about 7:30 in the morning and she'd say, "Joe, whatcha been doing today?" She was the flower lady and still is to this day. That was her name. For her, it was enough; she was full.

I told you about Brady's wife, Jennifer. The backstory on Cinderella down at Disney... She wears a blue gown and children love to sit near her to let her tell them how neat they are. But she was just like a mom. She couldn't get a job at Disney. Sometimes a mom feels unemployed, unneeded. But, they gave her the job of selling corn dogs. They kind of got tired of her. She went to 12 interviews. They couldn't find a place for her on the park. Finally, they said, "Go sell corn dogs." Well, she made corn dogs magical. It was like Mickey was selling corn dogs in that insignificant little corn dog booth.

You're changing diapers, you're burping a baby, you're holding your grandchild, you're going back and forth to work, you're a single mom, taking the kids to school and you're back at home and you back at the job working and no one even sees, no one ever notices you're selling corn dogs.

But she was making magic out of the corn dogs. Well, the chief talent scout of Disney came by for a corn dog, accidentally. When he took a corn dog from Jennifer, who gets the snowflake in every mom, the gift of every woman's heart that God designed you so uniquely, he looked into her blue eyes and he said, "You haven't been discovered yet, have you?" She said, "What does that mean?" He said, "Give me a call," and he gave her his card. He interviewed her and said it was the best interview he ever did and sent her to Orlando to wear the gown of Aurora and Cinderella and other princess dresses.

You sell corn dogs well, right, moms? There are a lot of corn dogs in life, but to the Prince, where it matters, you're Cinderella, moms.

I've been reading a neat book, *mommies*; I recommend it. It's about Dr. Caroline Leaf. It's called *The Gift in You* and it talks about that. As I was perusing through this book... I don't really read books, I just read *through* them, but I was stopped; it was marvelous. I learned about the heart of a mom. And actually, men, it fits us really, really well also. She wrote it to moms, to ladies, but what she said was that your heart, which is of course your life... She said there are two trees in your heart. There is an evergreen tree called the Love Tree and there's another tree in your heart called The Fear Tree. The fear tree is dead and the love tree is alive.

She said every time there's an event – an encounter with a child, with an ex-husband, with a parent of your younger years or a parent of your grown-up years – you have an opportunity, at that moment, to either take that event with kindness and decorate the love tree in your heart, or to take that event with harshness and decorate the fear tree of your heart. If a child says an unkind word, you can treat that child with tenderness in spite of that word or you can treat that child with judgment and decorate the fear tree with it. If your husband speaks harshly and rudely to you, you can take that opportunity with forgiveness, even though it's hard to forgive, or you can take that thought with anger. If there's a rebellious child in the home, you can treat the child with grace or you can treat the child with worry and with fear.

There's a moment in your home when it seems like it's falling apart. You can decorate this tree with blame or you can decorate it with patience, knowing that at the end, God is going to reconcile. You can decorate your tree with gentleness or you can decorate your tree with guilt from past mistakes that you've made or you can become controlling.

Then she said that you can choose these thoughts. That's why it says in 2 Corinthians 10: 5 to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Proverbs 23 says you become what you think about. This becomes who you are.

Dr. Leaf would say, after studying the human mind for decades, that these thoughts become thought clusters and they get emotional hitchhikers. See if you can relate. If you're one who is good at decorating the love tree no matter what the event is, then an emotion of peace prevails your life. If you decorate the tree with bitter thoughts, then an emotion of stress will dominate your life. If you continually decorate the fear tree, then the emotion of self-pity will dominate your life, but if you spend your days decorating your love tree, a mood of contentment will overcome your life. Your hope will be the dominating emotion in your life. And of course, this becomes who you are to your kids, to your husband, to your ex-husband, to your grown parents, whoever is in your world. It's who you become.

For some of y'all who tend to be like me and tend more naturally to kind of hang out over by the fear tree, there is a great verse in 1 John 4: 8 and it says perfect love casts out fear. What Dr. Leaf says, in interpreting that scripture is that when you practice love, even if you haven't been good at it in the past, the love thoughts, love emotions will actually eradicate the fear tree. Isn't that neat? She said it actually produces... When you decorate the love tree purposefully with grace and with forgiveness and with peace, you begin to create your own endorphins – feelings and hormones of joy in your heart.

When you get home, you have three choices. Tonight, before bed, you have three choices. Tomorrow morning at work, you have three choices, mommies. You can take that thought and stuff it and if you stuff it, it'll become a volcano. Or you can take those events in your life and you can just make them more bitter and more angry. Or, you can take them to the cross, and may I say that perhaps if you do that today, it's safe there.

I'll tell you a couple of stories as I close, mommies. For those of y'all who are coming in here today, holding onto a shoe string of hope, those of you who entered our church today with just a sliver of life to hang onto...

A mom came up to me a minute ago, after the first service, and just put her head on my shoulder and just wept. For the mom that home is not a happy place, for the mom who walks into the home and it's a place of sorrow and grief, may I encourage you today...

Her name was Joanne. I knew her through her daughter. Her daughter had facial cancer. I got to know her daughter very well and kind of became a second dad to her daughter. As her daughter died over a two-year period of time, as the cancer ate her face away, literally, her dad, through all the brokenness, left the mom and married another lady. The mom was left without a daughter, without a husband, and without a home. She was destitute. But, there was a word spoken by her daughter just before she died. As she called her mom down to her soft voice, little Loriann said, "Mom, I want you to know Jesus the way I do."

Two years later, Joanne called me, after all of the two years of turmoil and sadness and grief, and she smiled over the phone through her tears. She said, "Joe, now I do. Now I know Jesus the way Loriann did." Because she found that a mom's heart is full when Jesus has the mom's heart. Can I say that again, moms? Little Joanne found that a mom's heart is full no matter what when Jesus owns her heart.

Of all the moms I've met this year at all the events around the country as I traveled, I met one mom I'll never forget. Her name was Sain Lincaju (sp). Sain was from Kenya. She grew up in a tribal environment, a primitive environment where girls were property, where girls were used, where girls were tossed around, where girls didn't have names, where genital mutilation was the practice of the village, where the dad, when she was ten, would sell her to the chief who already had four wives. Her dad sold this ten-year-old to the chief for a piece of land.

Little Sain ran through the wilderness and she found another village where she was taken in. Then they had to hide her away in another village and then another village where she was raped. Somehow, after giving birth to her little girl, she found her way to America. Somehow, as she lived in poverty and a shelter with her little girl, there was a dear woman, a Christian woman who took Miss Sain to a church in Wichita like Woodland Hills, a place where guests are more than welcome. That's one thing I love about this church. You just love to bring people to this church. It's just that kind of a place.

So, she came to this place and her pastor began to talk about Jesus. Then Rich Mullins began to sing that dear song that he sang before he died. *Our God is an Awesome God*. Rich was a Wichita man and the words of Rich's song began to penetrate Sain Lincaju's heart. She said a peace came over her as she walked down the aisle. She said, "All the dirt that I felt and all the abuse that I felt began to shed off my heart." She said, "I wept at the altar that day where I met my daddy." She said, "Now I realize that my life is in his hands and now I'm going back to Kenya to tell the other girls that they have got a daddy."

Moms, today, I invite you to come to your Daddy. I remember coming home when I'd been traveling probably for two or three weeks. Little Cooper was maybe two or three years old; my youngest child. I had contracted a virus and I knew I was contagious. I was very sick. Somehow, I came slipping into my house and here comes Cooper running across the kitchen. He would always run and jump into my arms and say, "Daddy, what did you bring me." And I would say, "I brought you me." And he would say, "What else did you bring me?"

He came running over and I just ducked into our bedroom and shut the door. I guess our little babysitter wasn't paying attention. He began to beat on the door, "Daddy, let me in." But I was so sick, I couldn't open the door, I couldn't let him in. That day in my tears on that bed, I thought about the day Jesus became very ill, the day became very, very sick for sick hours as he became all of this and he wrapped his arms around all those events in your life that have caused hurt and now producing worry and fear and anger. And he became all of that so that he could give you a happy Mother's Day wherever you are, so that he could give you his unconditional forgiveness and his everlasting love.

Moms, as we sing this song, this is for you. I invite you, whatever your journey has been like, to come to your Daddy today, come to him with your whole heart and let him take you in his arms and melt the fear tree out of your life forever.