



The Gift of Parenting!

The gift of parenting – – aahhh, there are days we may ask ourselves, is it REALLY a gift? And the answer is YES, of course it is! There's no question, parenting is hard work – yet a true blessing and worth every minute. We have heard it time and time again, "There's no template or book on raising children" – each one precious, unique and on occasion, challenging, but certainly a gift and miracle from God.

When we become parents – whether it's planned or a SURPRISE – we draw from our own experience and adopt practices received from those who raised us. We also work with our spouse to meld together the qualities we feel strongly about in raising our own children. I remember our oldest son, Alex, being a year old when Stephen and I disagreed strongly over who would be responsible for Alex's car insurance, when the time came. In my house growing up, my parents took care of our insurance, but when Stephen turned 16, if he wanted to drive, he was responsible for paying his own insurance. Looking back, it was quite silly that this argument took place when our son was barely a year old, but it shows you how passionate we can be over the values and lessons we deem as important to pass along to our children. The decision our parents made had little to do with whether they could or couldn't afford to pay the insurance, but it was more about what was important to them, the values they wanted to pass along and the lesson they wanted us to learn. In today's world, there are so many more external influences – including technology! We second guess ourselves on parenting decisions. We feel the pressure of what other parents are doing and what society tells us we should be doing. All the while, we

strive to hold on to our beliefs, our values and our faith. Keep your focus, don't let go and don't give in! Communicating with your children, spending quality time and making the most of each moment – if they know they are loved, nothing more is needed.

On this Mother's day, I invite you to take a moment to pause and reflect on your life and your mother or mother figures who have influenced or continue to influence your life. Whether you



call her mother, mommy, mom, aunt, grandma or simply, life saver, she breathed life into you and equipped you with gifts, tools and teachings which you take with you, everywhere you go. I hope love is on the list of qualities that comes to mind when you think of this special person. When I think of my own mother – who I miss dearly – and I reflect on her strengths and amazing qualities, it was her ability to love without condi-

tion that tops the list. She was able to accept people where they were and without judgment. While she didn't mince words, you always knew where you stood, and even when some sentiments came across in a direct tone, she delivered her message in a way that only reaffirmed her love for you. These are a few traits my mom shared with me and while I have not mastered, these characteristics live inside of me, and I draw on them often.

It was the love Mary had for her son Jesus that gave her strength. She knew the love that He had for each one of us. Mary is the mother of all mothers. She is someone we respect, love and honor. We can draw strength from her in our time of need.

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