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Mother's Day

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What hasn't already been said about Mother's Day? To say anything is to take a risk as we all have different relationships and experiences with our own mothers or as mothers ourselves. There is no one-size-fits-all Mother's Day sentiment. So, today I want to focus on one aspect of mothering, not as a parent, but as a child, an adult child.

Some have excellent relationships with their mothers, others have relationships fraught with distress, but both eventually come to a point where they realized not only that their mothers were not perfect, but that they didn't have to be.

Even when bonds must be broken, healing and growing individually means letting go of the ideal of the too-good mother, and cultivating forgiveness, even privately, so that we can move beyond the young-child chapter of our lives and into greater maturity. This is a hard but important process that perhaps isn't spoken of often. For those with mothers who left them feeling unmothered, the soul seems to cling to the what-ifs, and if-only's, and finding the strength to venture forth, letting go of the search for a mother, can be a slow, painful process. Yet, for those with wonderful mothers, the need for and ability to let go of the mother and move into independence can be obscured by comfort and safety and familiarity. For mothers, the acceptance of these natural stages can be heart-wrenching; many may even resist, like one is tempted to resist against the waves of contractions during labor. There is a time for all of us to let go. Every day of childhood is one day closer to the God-given day of letting go. Emotionally, mentally, perhaps spiritually, and eventually physically. Motherhood, childhood, prepares us for these always recurring cycles of life. The time to nurture, the time to let go, the time to hold, and the time to step back, a time to be safe with our mothers, and a time to risk as we step out on our own. The lifelong dance between mother and child, between the known and unknown, of holding and losing, is a mirror of the dance of life, a practice for the ultimate letting go of this life and reaching into the next.

Might it do us well, as both mothers and children, to recognize that the goal was never to be safe in each other's arms forever? Mother's Day can be anywhere from a joy, a painful reminder, a heart-warming afternoon, an emptiness. What might it look like for Mother's Day to be

peaceful despite our experiences? Peace with the acceptance of the temporal nature of this life, peace with the fruit of the goodness our mothers gave us, peace with our capability of creating something out of the mess of the bad that they gave us, peace with the humanity of our mothers, who repeated the mothering they were given by mothers who were doing the same, peace with our separateness from our mothers, peace with the strengths and weaknesses of our mothers, peace with the past, peace with the present, peace with the future, peace in God's goodness and provision for us.

This Mother's Day, what if we took a moment of solitude for ourselves to appreciate our mothers, their contribution or their pain, appreciate their path in life, appreciate our ability to choose new paths, appreciate the great responsibility of motherhood, appreciate grace, for them, for us, for all?

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

Thank God for our weaknesses, the weaknesses of our mothers, the weaknesses when our loving mothers depart, for in our weaknesses, in our lack and pain, God's power breaks through.

Mothers, this Mother's Day, take a moment of solitude for yourself. To reflect with peace on the fleeting privilege of those young years, to respect the responsibility not only to nurture and guide, but to let go with grace when that day comes, to reflect on the grace of God, on your strength, on your humanity, on the experiences which have made you who you are, and on the God who sees you in fullness, on the goodness of the individuality of your children, whom God created, of letting go of control, and letting go of shame.

Hug your children, hug your mother, hug yourself.

Create peace this Mother's Day.

