

# What My Mother Did Right

## Part 2

Selected Texts

Written By

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Scripture is clear regarding the importance of following godly examples as you move through life. Writing to church leaders, Peter said as much:

<sup>3</sup> nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be **examples** to the flock (1 Pet. 5).

Of keen interest here is the Greek word for *example*, *typos* (τύπος). Danker and Bauer's *Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* gives us a much needed definition:

**τύπος, ου, ό** (Aeschyl., Hdt.+; ins in var. senses: New Docs 4, 41f; loanw. in rabb.).

① a mark made as the result of a blow or pressure, **mark, trace** (Posidon.: 169 Fgm. 1 Jac.; Anth. Pal. 6, 57, 5 ὀδόντων; Athen. 13, 49, 585c τῶν πληγῶν; Diog. L. 7, 45; 50 of a seal-ring; ViJer 13 [p. 73, 10 Sch.]; Philo, Mos. 1, 119; Jos., Bell. 3, 420; PGM 4, 1429; 5, 307. — ὁ ἐκ τῆς αἰσθήσεως τ. ἐν διανοίᾳ γινόμενος Did., Gen. 217, 19) τῶν ἡλῶν J 20:25ab (v.l. τὸν τόπον).—This may be the place for οἱ τύποι τῶν λίθων Hs 9, 10, 1f (taking a stone out of the ground leaves a hole that bears the contours of the stone, but in effect the stone has made the impression; s. KLake, *Apost. Fathers* II, 1917; MDibelius, *Hdb.* But s. 4 below).

② embodiment of characteristics or function of a model, **copy, image** (cp. Artem. 2, 85 the children are τύπ. of their parents.—Cp. ὁ γὰρ ἥλιος ἐν τύπῳ θεοῦ ἐστίν Theoph. Ant. 2, 15 [p. 138, 8]) the master is a τύπος θεοῦ *image of God* to the

slave B 19:7; D 4:11. The supervisor/bishop is τύπος τοῦ πατρός ITr 3:1; cp. IMg 6:1ab (in both instances here, τύπον is Zahn's conjecture, favored by Lghtf., for τόπον, which is unanimously read by Gk. and Lat. mss., and which can be retained, with Funk, Hilgenfeld, Krüger, Bihlmeyer).

③ an object formed to resemble some entity, *image, statue* of any kind of material (Hdt. 3, 88,3 τύπ. λίθινος. Of images of the gods Herodian 5, 5, 6; Jos., Ant. 1, 311 τ. τύπους τῶν θεῶν; 15, 329; SibOr 3, 14) Ac 7:43 (Am 5:26).<sup>1</sup>

Just as an artisan of stone sculpture looked at a live person and copied their outer persona into a piece of marble, so elders, the spiritual leaders of the church, are to live in such a holy, righteous fashion that parishioners can study their lives and mold their lives accordingly. Following an example of someone following hard after Christ, therefore, shows you it is possible for you, too, to attain a higher level of spiritual growth.

Where mothers are concerned it goes without saying how important and powerful their examples are to their children. They play a major part in the life of their children emotionally, cognitively, socially, financially, and, of course, spiritually, which is, in my estimation, the most important dimension. Granted, for some, they sadly did not receive any spiritual model from their mother, which moved them to, hopefully, seek that model elsewhere. For others, they, like myself, were fortunate to have a mother who loved and walked with God and taught her children how to know and follow God by every facet of her life example (Ecc. 12:13-14; Prov. 1).

Believe me, I have studied her life, whether she knows it or not, for the last sixty-two years and sought to learn from her. I shared last year some of the salient spiritual truths she has either taught me directly or indirectly, but that sermon only scratched the surface. In light of that reality, I would like to present a few more concepts which move us toward achieving three goals: one, to extol the godly mothers among us for a job well-done; two, to show younger mothers what a godly mothers looks like so they can emulate these proven behaviors; and three, to challenge those mothers who do not have a faith-walk with the Master, Jesus, to embrace Him in faith. This will prove to be the wisest, most beneficial move you will ever make for it will positively transform your temporal and eternal existence.

So, let us get to it by posing our thematic question so we can delve into its coveted answers for life and living.

## What Did My Mother Do Right?

For starters, let me say my dear mother would be the first to say she was, and is, far from perfect. No mother is. Did she make mistakes along the way? Could she have done things differently as she raised us? A little less corporeal punishment from my perspective would have been nice for starters ☺. Even before I knew who James Dobson was, I learned from my mother's lips that I must be the boy behind the best-selling book *The Strong-Willed Child*. Erma Bombeck's words could have easily been my mother's back in the day, "When my kids become wild and unruly, I use a nice, safe playpen. When they're finished, I climb out." Can you relate?

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1019-1020.

Seriously, join me as I ponder those admirable traits any godly, spiritually growing mother should evidence in her life so her children, in turn, know how to know the living God and develop a personal relationship with Him.

### Timely Trait #5: She Was/Is A Woman Of The Word

My mother gave me many priceless gifts in life.

- A listening ear as I sought wisdom and counsel on a variety of life topics.
- A confrontational word when my life choices were not spiritually optimal.
- A love of music, especially the piano. I started taking lessons with my older sister Marla, and my mother drove us to those lessons which occurred back to back. As we aged and did not get along during our lessons (Marla, who majored in piano in college and was always the consummate, devoted pianist, typically helped our teacher verbally reprimand me for not practicing my scales, arpeggios and hand drills. You can image how they went over in a lesson with me . . . the competitive brother), my mother drove us at two separate times each week to make sure our lesson time was optimal. She also took my little sister to lessons as well. In my case, she did this for nine years. Yikes. What devotion. Now, I am glad and appreciative she kept driving me, for I benefit each day from music. Who cannot have a spiritual moment with God listening to or playing a *Nocturne* from Chopin, or taking in one of Rachmaninoff's great masterpieces. Sometimes at my desk I simply have to stop and just connect with the mystery of God as I listen to the beauty of music. Thanks mom for the priceless gift.

Yes, thanks for all the priceless gifts.

But of all the gifts my mother gave me, a love of the Word of God has to be at the top. She read the words of Jesus in Matthew 4:4 and applied them not only to herself, but to us as well.

<sup>4</sup> But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4).

She learned to feed on the life-giving, wisdom-giving Scriptures and taught us to follow suit as we grew up. I was so convinced of the power of the Word of God as a young child, I went to her once and said as I held my Bible, "Mother, I believe that all the answers to life are found in this book," . . . and, indeed, they are.

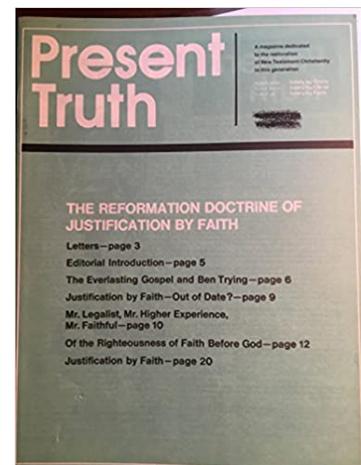
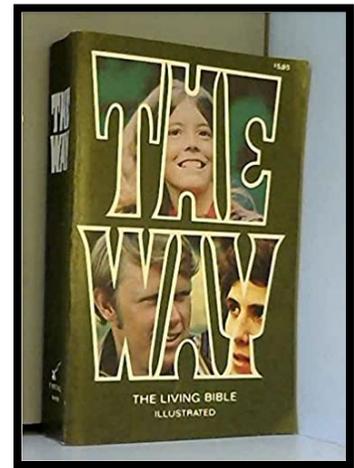
- When I wondered where we came from, I had the Word.
- When I wondered who created God since everything is a series of cause and effect, I had the Word.
- When I wondered why there was so much pain and suffering in the world, I had the Word.
- When I needed wisdom regarding who should be my friends, I had the Word.
- When I needed guidance with dating, I had the Word.
- When I wanted to know why is this holy book THE holy book, I had the Word.
- When I wanted to know where time was going, I had the Word.

- When I pondered how to be a godly young man, a wise student, and a righteous husband and father, I had the Word.
- When I lost family and friends along the way, some tragically and some through natural causes, I had the Word.
- When the Devil sought to deceive me with cultic friends, I had the Word.
- When life got me down, I had the Word.

I could go on but I am sure you get the point. My mother gave me the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, and once I became a believer in Jesus, I had the Spirit of God to be my teacher to instruct me in His ways (“*But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things,*” 1 John 2:20; “*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God,*” 1 Corinthians 2:12).

How did my mother give me the Word? Good question. Here are some timely answers to the pivotal question:

- She bought me a Bible and challenged me to read it. My first Bible, which I still have, is a black King James Version. I used it. Later, in High School, she purchased me a cooler looking Bible. Perhaps you will remember it. They called it “The Way,” which represent the first name non-Christians used to describe Christians (Acts 19:23; 22:4; 24:14). When I headed off to college at Azusa Pacific University in Los Angeles, she hooked me up with the *Scofield Reference Bible*, my first study Bible. It carried me through college and four years at Dallas Theological Seminary.
- She actually read her Bible. I distinctly remember her reading her Harper’s Study Bible. It was always lying around for easy access.
- She entertained my questions about the Bible as I read. When I burst into her bedroom late one night desiring an explanation of the end time events as detailed in Ezekiel 38, she . . . and my half-asleep father . . . indulged me.
- She made sure biblical material was readily available in our home. Biblically-based books and magazines adorned many coffee tables. I still have copies of *Present Truth*. When I was older and could handle it, Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *The Cost of Discipleship* was another book in the house.
- She taught the Bible to little children, and she also participated in Bible studies for adults.
- She engaged in theological discussions almost every time we went over to the homes of other parishioners for fellowship after Sunday evening worship. I remember sitting and listening to these adults discuss a wide variety of theological and biblical questions. My favorite centered on whether we were living in the last days prior to Christ’s return. Eventually,



all of this led to my love of studying eschatology . . . something I have been committed to from my teen years until now.

Sure, my mother was not as interested as I was, and am, in the finer points of biblical exegesis, but that initial and insatiable hunger for knowing God and God's ways by means of digging into His inspired book came from my dear mother. I cannot put a price tag on the value of this gift. It has changed my life, given me insight for living, provided hope in hopeless times, shown me how to love a wife of forty-years, how to raise children to God's glory, just to mention a few concepts. Really, as I step back and look at this gift from my mother, how was I to know it would be a gift which would become a career as a shepherd, as a pastor-teacher (Eph. 4:11)? How unfathomable are the ways of God.

Thank you mom for this priceless gift. For all those mothers who are, like my mother, giving your children the Word, I pray God's richest blessings on your efforts. May your example, your effort pay dividends which will amaze you and give God glory in your twilight years. And for those mothers who are hearing a word from the Spirit of God right now, might He show you how you can do so much more in making sure your children develop a deep, abiding admiration for this book of all books. And for those children who had a mother who was wise enough to instill in you a love for the Bible, why not take a moment today and tell her thanks for the life impact.

### Timely Trait #6: She Was/Is A Radical Disciple

What is a disciple? He or she is a believer who counts the cost of following *hard* after Christ and he/she, then, willingly chooses to follow at this selfless, sacrificial level. Jesus told us this much when He taught about the subject:

<sup>37</sup>He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>38</sup> And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me (Matt. 10).

Carrying the cross of Christ throughout life is all about putting Him first, even above family and friends, it is about sacrificing your hopes, dreams, and desires for His, it is about putting eternal things above temporal things, it is about your thoughts becoming His thoughts, and it is about doing His will, not yours. It is so much more. It is about being confessional more often than not (1 John 1:9), of being known for generosity, of serving the body behind the scenes and being content with obscurity, of being given to prayer for yourself and others, of knowing each day you battle with the world, the flesh, and the Devil (Eph. 6:10ff; 1 John 2:16). Yes, these are some of the traits of a disciple. I saw them lived out in my mother's life.

In the mid-80s, when she and my father, moved from San Diego to Stockton so she could be near her sister, Roberta, who had battled breast cancer for many years, the move had discipleship written all over it. At the time, they had a great life in Poway, with my father enjoying a rewarding career with U.S. Customs, and since he was only in his mid-50s he had many more profitable years ahead of him. They had a great church, Rancho Bernardo Community, and countless wonderful friends. Yet, when the opportunity arose for them to sell everything and move to the other end of the state of California, they did it. My father retired, they sold their home, and bought another home. Who would know that

within a few short months Roberta would pass expectantly into God's glorious presence. Yet that is exactly what happened.

They had questions after this tragic loss. Had they made the best and wisest decision? Should they have moved when they did? Looking back now, their radical move following God could not have been more strategic. Eventually, I pastored their small church plant, Twin Oaks, for nineteen years. The first home they helped us purchase eventually positioned Liz and I to move here and purchase the home we have in Burke. Yes, my mother's sacrifice back then to follow God's leading into the unknown, eventually set the stage for me to be the pastor of Burke Community Church on the other side of the country. How lofty and unfathomable are the ways of God? The older I get as a fellow disciple, I more I focus on God's words through Isaiah's pen:

<sup>8</sup> For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts (Isa. 55).

In 1971 my father's boss and best friend, J.D. Williams, took a job with U.S. Customs here in D.C. during the Nixon administration. We drove back here from southern California to see J.D. and his wife, Oweda, during the hot, humidity of June. As we left town headed for my father's family in South Carolina, we children in unison told my parents to NEVER move to this place. Funny, is it not, how God works? When we first moved here in 2008, my mother came out to visit us. I took her to see the Lincoln Memorial one night. Pausing near the Potomac as we headed back to the car, I said to her, "Mother, remember what we, your children said when we came here in 1972?" She laughed. We both agreed that night in the moonlight that God's ways are wise and past finding out . . . but they are perfect. Disciples of Jesus know this stuff. Prior to our move, my mother told us, "I would rather you be in the center of God's will, than living near me out of His will." That, my friend, is a disciple talking.

As her life narrowed in the sunset years of her life, she realized the strategic importance of moving across country to live near me and Liz. Sure, she wanted to near us; however, she also wanted to be an active part in what God is doing in and through this church. She looked for places to serve God in a new fashion, and the opportunity to build new friends since so many of her friends in California were gone. So, what did she do? Alone now, she did the unthinkable. She downsized, giving away or selling many of her cherished possessions and memorable things, and she sold the home where she had so many warm memories of my dad and us being there with our children. As she told me, "Son, there comes a time in your life when you have to let go of things and move on." Again, my friend, that is a disciple of Christ talking to you . . . and to me. What is a disciple but one who is ready and willing to radically follow God's leading, no matter where that takes them or what it costs, or what their age is.

If you are a mother who happens to be a disciple of Christ, your radical discipleship, your desire to go where He leads you is teaching your children one of the greatest concepts they can ever learn. May He richly bless your sacrifice. And if you hear the voice of the Spirit calling to you right now as a mother, if you sense Him asking you, "When is the last time you did something radical in your quest of following Me?" . . . I think you know what you need to do. A simple prayer is in order, "Lord, here I am. Show me the way you want me to go, and I shall follow."

Growing up, we used to sing a challenging hymn titled *Where He Leads Me I Will Follow*. Looking back now, I can safely say that song, more than most in my life, has come to exemplify

how a wise, loving, faithful, and godly mother chooses to live. I can say this because, as I have said, I have seen it in my dear mother's amazing example.

I can hear my Savior calling,  
I can hear my Savior calling,  
I can hear my Savior calling,  
Take thy cross and follow, follow Me.

*Refrain:*

Where He leads me I will follow,  
Where He leads me I will follow,  
Where He leads me I will follow,  
I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.

Mother's, there is no greater thing that could ever be said of you than you followed Jesus all the way. May God help you and empower you to walk in this way to His glory, and to the benefit of our children and grandchildren.

### Timely Trait #7: She Cared/Cares For The Less Fortunate

Jesus us tells us what He will be looking at when we stand before Him for the potential of reward for service rendered:

<sup>31</sup> But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; <sup>33</sup> and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup> 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; <sup>36</sup> naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' <sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? <sup>38</sup> 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? <sup>39</sup> 'And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' <sup>40</sup> 'And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even* the least of *them*, you did it to Me' (Matt. 25).

You will note how the selfless, sacrificial actions of the faithful saints are so natural those saints are kind of shocked by the Lord's words. The arrogant and the prideful keep track of what they have done in order to bring it out into the open when necessary to showcase to others for all the wrong reasons. The godly, however, do these works and forget about them. It is just who they are and how they function constantly. Life is not about them; it is about others. Life is not about getting; it is about giving. Life is not about being selfish, but being selfless.

My mother is one of these spiritual people. Now, I will preface what I am going to say with what Jesus warned us in Matthew 6:

<sup>1</sup> Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. <sup>2</sup> "When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. <sup>3</sup> But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing <sup>4</sup> that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. <sup>5</sup> And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. <sup>6</sup> But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you (Matt. 6).

For one, my mother never does righteous deeds to be noticed by men. She does them to be noticed by God and to meet needs. For another, she would NEVER EVER say anything about what she does because she is a quiet, godly woman. All of this, however, does not mean I cannot say something for instructional purposes.

For about five years, I preached and taught at a local youth prison outside of Stockton, CA. When my life reached a point where it was not possible for me to head out here, I challenged saints to step forward and take the lead. Several godly women stepped forward, including my mother. What? My father put criminals in places like this, and she was going to go in willingly? What?



That is exactly what she did for many years before she came here. She said the first time she went in and the massive steel doors closed behind her, she kind of got a little unsettled. This is for real, she thought. And then she wondered, "What am I, a Senior Citizen, going to say to hardened young criminals?" Years later, she had acquired many stories of touched and changed lives . . . all because she went where most would never venture: into a

prison with convicted criminals. On one occasion she struggled telling a young person about the love of a heavenly father when they had absolutely no love in her family from any person, let alone a father. On another occasion, a young girl from a troubled home, looked at her and said, "I wish you were my mother."

As I have pastored this church this year, one thing has stood out to me. We have many mothers here who know the importance of showing love, care, and compassion to the less fortunate among us. Whether it is providing food for the needy in a food drive, or being a counselor for young pregnant mothers who are thinking about an abortion, many of our mothers are offering cold cups of spiritual water to the spiritually thirsty. God will reward you one day for your actions, but in the here and now you are a living example of what it means to be a Christ-follower to your children.

I ask you: What greater thing can you be known for than a woman who is an example to your children, and to others, regarding what a Christian woman is supposed to look like? I thank God for mothers like you, and, I am especially thankful to my mother who did things right with

her spiritual life. I am the better man for it. So, in light of all of this, I have to pause and say Happy Mother's Day to you, Mom, and all those moms who are doing what God has called them to do.