

**TREASURES OF YOUR
MOTHER'S HEART**

Dedicated to Jonathan and Robert,
Our sons for fleeting years on this earth,
Sons of God for all eternity.

Dear Jonathan and Robert,

One morning as I was headed out for a walk with Savannah during a period when I was conscious of the fragility of my life, the thought came to me that I would like to leave you something of lasting value. As long as I am with you, I want to love you in such a way that you are drawn to God's love for you, and to live my life with you in ways that show you the benefits of walking with God in hopes that you will desire to follow God with your whole heart in your own life, ever learning what it means to surrender to his sovereignty in everything.

The only thing of real lasting value I can hope to leave behind me is God's truth. What I want to pass on to you then is a spiritual inheritance, the spiritual treasures I have collected through my years in my walk with God and from my life experiences.

I share with you my wanderings in the wilderness to declare God's faithfulness and love, and to encourage you to look for the evidence of God's hand on your own life. May God's character and his truth become the lenses through which you view your own circumstances and make choices throughout your life.

Love,

*Mom
May 1998*

Trusting God No Matter What

As I reflect on my first experience with cancer, it changed my life and my thinking in many ways, the most significant being a deeper level of trust in God. Just a few weeks after the long wait to have my chemo treatments behind me, I discovered a lump on my chest just under my right collar-bone. The days of waiting for testing to be done and results to be revealed were difficult, especially since one of my doctors had said it would not surprise him if the cancer was back considering the aggressive nature of my cancer. I was sure this was the beginning of the end for me. On hearing the results of the testing, that it was not cancer, I felt like my life had been given back to me! Mixed with the incredible sense of relief and gratitude was a disturbing feeling that the experience had shaken my confidence and trust in God. How could I trust a God who still might allow me to die young, leaving my husband alone and my children with the emotional scares of losing their mother while they were so young? The immediate crisis about my health was over but I had no guarantees that I would not face cancer again in the future.

During this time of intense turmoil questioning whether God could be trusted, we received a call from the director of the Christian camp where we had once worked, saying he would be at a local camp in California and could we get together. I was eager to talk with him and ask how he had continued to trust the God who had allowed his nine year-old daughter to die of leukemia that fall after several years of battling with the disease. I will never forget our discussion and the profound impact it had on the deepening of my faith.

He commented that it seemed I was trying to trust God for the wrong thing. I wanted to trust God to make everything OK, but was I willing to trust God no matter what? Could I trust God in the midst of trouble? I was willing to trust God only if He would guarantee that He wouldn't allow anything awful to happen. Of course I knew there were no such guarantees and

that we the source of my turmoil. He went on to explain that he and his wife found they could trust God no matter what, that even in the most difficult times and in the on-going sadness over their loss they had found God to be completely trustworthy.

He told me a good friend of his summed it up by the phrase, “Life is tough, but God is good.” No matter what our circumstances may be, God is always good. His friend was the chaplain at Dallas Theological Seminary who also had been my high school youth pastor. Years later I was at a women’s conference where my old youth pastor’s wife was the speaker and I shared with her what perspective that phrase has given me over the years. She explained that it originated with her mother who had passed it on to her during a time of family crisis. God had used His truth, spoken through faithful messengers over the years to reach me in my time of desperate need.

I went away from that conversation with a sense of hope. My trust in God could sustain me if I was willing to truly trust God, not just if He kept me healthy, but to believe He would be good even if my life circumstances were tough. Isn’t that what God desires from us above all else, our utter dependence on Him?

The seed of truth about God’s utter trustworthiness began to grow in me from that point as I began to believe by faith that I could trust and depend on God no matter what. Something I had known in my head was planted in my heart that day. Trusting in God did not guarantee being protected from trouble. It did not mean God would always make my life OK—it meant God would make me OK, no matter what was going on in my life.

God's Presence With Us

There is not one of us who won't face periods of tough times. The problems may be health related, financial, relationship struggles, work related, and they may be big or small, but none of us escapes times when life is difficult. How do we as believers triumph in those tough times? If we respond naturally, we will be anxious, or angry, or depressed, or self-reliant...but as Christians, God give us resources to respond supernaturally. One of God's resources which has sustained me over and over is His promised presence with me in everything.

Many of the Scriptures that remind us of the truth that God is with us in trouble also tell us not to be afraid. Recognizing God's presence with us will take away our anxiety and give us the power to be at peace in the midst of trouble.

Isaiah 41:10 says, "Fear not for I am with you. Be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you; yea I will help you; yea I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness." This was the verse that the house-parents at the missionary children's home in Oklahoma City my junior year of high school had us memorize before starting into the frightening experience of a new school, new friends, and being away from home. I felt God's presence and help each time I remembered to meditate on that verse. Years later when I was leaving for NIH for my final treatment of high dose chemo, something I feared, a good friend gave me a beautiful pillow case to take with me to use during my hospital stay on which she had written this verse. Besides being a wonderful conversation piece, it was a special reminder that I could lay down my head and sleep in peace, resting on God's promise that I did not need to fear no matter what happened because God was with me.

In Deuteronomy 31:8 Moses says to Joshua, “The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged.” The first time I came across this verse was in a note from a missionary who worked with my parents in Mexico who had also had breast cancer. It was such an encouragement to picture that God was going before me and would be with me in my surgery and whatever would come after.

We are reminded in Isaiah 43:1-3 that God does not promise to spare us from troubles, but He will protect us in the midst of trouble. “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” (NIV) We can be secure in the midst of the waters and the fire because He will protect us from being destroyed by our troubles. Our bodies may suffer, but if we remember that our bodies are our “earthly tent” (II Corinthians 5:1) our temporary dwelling which will return to dust, and who we are (our souls) will outlive our earthly bodies, we can better understand what it means that we are being protected when our bodies are suffering.

I think the thing we fear more than anything as human beings is death. It marks the end of life as we know it, everything after is unfamiliar territory. During our times of doubt we question whether what we have been taught in the scriptures about the hereafter and wonder, what if it isn't true? Psalm 23 paints the beautifully comforting picture of Jesus as our shepherd. (Living in modern culture we are not very familiar with shepherds and sheep so I love the book, A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23 which opened my eyes to insights I would otherwise have missed.) Addressing our deepest fear, verse 4 says, “Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

(NIV) We are promised protection from evil in death, protection from being overtaken and destroyed by the enemy, protection from all the tools of the evil one, especially fear. In death our body is destroyed but as I Corinthians 15 reminds us, our souls are protected in death and we will one day be given imperishable bodies of heavenly splendor.

One of the names of Jesus is Immanuel which means “God with us” (Mathew 1:23), an everlasting reminder of the truth of His presence with us. As we learn to walk more and more with an awareness of God’s presence in our lives, our fears can be relieved and replaced with an unshakable peace knowing the all powerful God of the universe is with us.

On Memorials

On one of my health check ups at NIH about a year and a half after my stem cell transplant, I was asked if I would like to participate in making a square for a breast cancer quilt, which would hang permanently in the National Cancer Institute. The idea of creating a quilt square that would somehow represent my experience with cancer intrigues me. Since my checkups with a CT and bone scan always make me feel like I am going in to get a verdict on my life, cancer issues and my emotions about them were stirred up. I don’t consider myself to have much artistic talent, so I was unsure whether I’d be able to come up with anything. But as I began thinking about it on the plane trip home, the ideas flowed.

I have often thought about how my cancer experience has affected me, but what was unique and so beneficial about this project is that it went beyond putting my thoughts into words. The symbols and imagery took on personal meaning that express for me all the emotions and experiences of dealing with cancer in a way that words could not do. The old saying that “a picture says a thousand words” took on meaning for me in a new way.

The following paragraph I submitted with my quilt piece describes the picture that came to me as I thought about my experience with cancer and explains what the images represent.

“My experience with cancer has been a challenging, stretching journey. I climbed the first mountain of a mastectomy, chemo and later radiation in 1991 after discovering a lump under my arm while nursing my second child. I enjoyed a green valley of health for 4 1/2 years then struggled up a more difficult mountain in 1996 after a recurrence treated by a stem cell transplant. There were dark storm clouds over each mountain (coming to terms with disfigurement, loss of my hair, facing my mortality), and the clouds became black during the complications I experienced following my transplant (severe infection, physical pain and weakness, a temporary colostomy...) But the clouds have silver linings—I have become stronger from the challenges of my journey and have grown as a person. My faith in God has been tested and deepened. I am clearer about who I am and what is and what is not important to me. I am more open with giving and receiving love. I live more in the present, aware most days of the gift today is. Throughout my experience I have felt surrounded and supported by so much love from family, friends and my medical team, represented by the heart border. Sometimes I walk in the shadows of my cancer experience (fears of recurrence, anxiety about the future), but gradually the shadows are being washed away by the sunshine, my hopes for a bright future. The dove above my pathway symbolizes God’s presence with me each step of the way which has given me strength and peace, and a growing confidence that I’ll be OK no matter what the future holds.”

Others may catch a glimpse of the symbolic meaning in the images of my picture, for example, they may recognize that the heart border represents being surrounded by love. But when I look at those hearts, it conjures up more than an abstract idea. I remember the faces of

those who loved me and I am reminded of the many expressions of love I received. The dove reminds me that God is still with me, just as He has been each step of the way, and I am encouraged and comforted.

My square being part of the quilt at NIH represent to me not being alone in my experience with cancer. The quilt tells the story of women who have battled this devastating disease and my personal experience is a significant part of that picture. I hope the quilt will remind people that breast cancer is not some abstract disease—breast cancer is about individual women who are fighting for their lives.

I made an extra quilt piece to frame and keep at home with my paragraph attached to the back because it ended up holding so much meaning for me. I remember someone encouraging me to make some kind of memorial that could remind me of the incredible ways God worked in my life during my experiences with cancer, just as Joshua was commanded to do after crossing the Jordan River. The priests had obeyed God’s instructions and by faith stepped into the flowing river with the ark—only then did the river stop flowing and the Israelites crossed the river on dry land. Following God’s instructions, Joshua appointed a man from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, saying, “Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the Covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.” (Joshua 4:5-7)

So now I have my memorial. In a glad I can be reminded of the incredible ways God has worked in my life. My hope is that in the future your children will ask, “What does this picture

mean?” and you can teach them about God’s faithfulness and mercy as you tell them about my journey with cancer.

On Bowing to God’s Sovereignty

One day I received a note from the woman who had been my housemother during my junior year of high school. As she updated me on her husband’s failing health she wrote, “The older I get, the more I am learning to bow to God’s sovereignty in my life.” What a beautiful picture of acknowledging and willingly accepting God’s loving control over our lives.

In Jerry Bridges’ book, Trusting God, he explains that in order to trust God in adversity we must believe 1) that God is completely sovereign, 2) that God is infinite in wisdom, and 3) that God is perfect in love. Many verses in the Bible make it very clear that God is sovereign, He is all-powerful and He is in complete control, even over physical afflictions. (Isaiah 46:10, Exodus 4:11).

If God is in control of all things, why does He allow difficult circumstances and even tragedies in our life? That is where trusting God’s wisdom and love come in. Bridges quotes someone as summing it up this way (p. 18), “God in His love always wills what is best for us. In His wisdom He always knows what is best, and in His sovereignty He has the power to bring it about.” As human creatures, we cannot begin to comprehend God’s ways and His wisdom. As Paul states in Romans 11:33,34, “Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and His paths beyond tracing out. What has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?” God assures us of His love and compassion for us. (Lam. 3:22-23). He also affirms that His plans for us are good. (Jer. 29:11)

Romans 8:28 is a well-known verse regarding all things working out for our good according to God's plan. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." Often times we use this verse to reassure ourselves that everything will be OK, that God will turn a situation around and restore our circumstances to our good. The good God has in mind, however, described in the next verse is conforming us to the likeness of his Son. "For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers." (verse 29) This may mean circumstances aren't turned around and made good again. His sovereign plan will allow whatever it takes to mold our character and will into the likeness of Christ. And He may use the circumstances of our lives to conform others to His image as well as they are affected by our afflictions. To an unbeliever all this must sound like we are just trying to talk ourselves into believing that God loves us and is working things for our good when circumstances are bad!

Bowing to God's sovereignty does not imply that we are to accept the adversity because God has allowed it, what God wants us to accept is His plan. I remember in a conversation with our friends whose nine year-old daughter died of leukemia, her dad said they never quite fighting the disease, viewing it as an enemy of God, just as death is His enemy. But at the same time, they were able to accept God's timing of her death as being part of His sovereign plan for her life. They never gave in to the cancer, but they gave in to God, bowing to His sovereignty in their lives.

God's Word in Our Hearts

Jesus, whose example guides our way, resisted Satan's temptations with the Word of God. He was prepared to do battle with the enemy because the words He needed were hidden in His heart and came to His mind in His time of need. Our battles with the enemy are largely won or lost in our minds. Our will and emotions follow the lead of our thoughts. Isaiah 26:3 reminds us that our peace is determined by the focus of our thoughts. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon thee, because he trusteth in thee."

"Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might no sin against Thee." Ps. 119:11

Ps. 37:30,31, "The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just. The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip."

Deut. 6:6, "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts."

Romans 12:2, "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Ephesians 4:22-24, "You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self; created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

Colossians 3:9, 10, "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator."

I believe that many Christians struggle with practices that lead to sanctification not out of ignorance or lack of desire, but more from lack of organization or method. Memorizing

Scripture is often encouraged in young children through programs such as the AWANA program you participated in from the time you were old enough to join. Although your motivation at the time was primarily the awards, the purpose intended of hiding God's Word in your heart was accomplished and you gained confidence in memorization. But as adults, this discipline is often not maintained. We may memorize verses here and there, but we have difficulty retaining them so the effort becomes frustrating and fruitless.

A simple method promoted by the Navigators can turn a frustrating exercise into a successful and rewarding habit, arming us with the Word of God. Simply write the verse you want to memorize on small cards (cut from 3 x 5 cards) and take one with you throughout the day to work on while you're waiting at stoplights, waiting in carpool line, etc. Then maintain a collection of the cards so you can review, review, review throughout the years. Without the habit of review, our feeble minds do not retain much of what we have learned. Adding the routine of reviewing verses while getting ready in the morning is a small assignment, but it will "Set our minds on things above" before the pressures of the day distract us, and over time our armory to do battle with Satan will be well supplied.

The Shelter of God's Wings

When I spoke on the phone with a friend who had radical surgery to remove cancer on the back of her tongue about a month earlier, she expressed her discouragement and perplexity about feeling depressed. She'd had such incredible peace and joy throughout her experience of first hearing the news and going through a difficult surgery and recovery. She had just found out the change in her speech was not just due to swelling, that her lingual nerve had to be removed

so she permanently lost feeling in her tongue. Although her prognosis concerning the cancer was excellent, the realities of living with a permanent disability naturally discouraged her.

My friend questioned whether her faith had dwindled since the surgery, or whether she was simply in denial emotionally at that time as some of her friends had suggested. I don't believe either is the case. Looking back on my own experience and in talking with others, having a delayed emotional reaction is more common than not. During times of crisis, I believe God often surrounds us with His protection. As Psalm 91:4 says, "He will cover you with his feathers and under His wings you will find refuge." He gives us shelter under His wings and protects us from the negative emotions, which could overwhelm us. Once we become stronger physically He begins to allow our emotions to catch up with us.

After a very difficult experience it is natural to walk through a very dark place emotionally. In those dark places we can lose sight of God, and sometimes it seems as though He is hiding His face. David expressed this struggle in Psalm 13:12 saying, "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and everyday have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?" We are especially vulnerable when physical pain and weakness drags on and on, wearing down our spirit. Drugs to dull the pain also dull the mind so it becomes difficult to read God's Word or even to utter simple prayers.

The May 10 *Streams in the Desert* entry includes this insight into the life of a modern day "spiritual giant". "Hudson Taylor was so feeble in the closing months of his life that he wrote a dear friend: 'I am so weak I cannot write; I cannot read my Bible, I cannot even pray. I can only lie still in God's arms like a little child, and trust.' And that is the resolution David came to in

Psalm 13:5 after his dark questions, “But I trust in your unfailing love, my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord for He has been good to me.”

A.W. Tozer is quoted as saying, “Trust God in the dark till the light returns.” Our fear in the dark place comes from the lies of the enemy telling us God has forgotten us or was never there in the first place.

On Anger

Joy is the expression of peace. There are so many things in our lives that steal our joy. One of the most common is anger. When we are carrying around anger, we are not at peace with ourselves, with others, or with God. Why do we find it so hard sometimes to resolve our anger? For one thing, our pride stands in the way. Resolving anger involves forgiveness and that is humbling. Even if our anger is in response to being offended or unfairly treated by someone else, the anger we carry around can be sinful depending on what we do with it.

Anger is a signal we need to pay attention to. Sometimes it means we do need to confront a wrong, or we need to say no, or we need to take responsibility for ourselves in some way. But it is usually difficult to do the confronting in love and not out of our anger. Who is our real enemy when we are angry? Is it the person who offended us? No, it is Satan who wants to defeat us, wreck relationships and cause us to be unfruitful. When we confront our real enemy, it opens the door for us to be drawn together with the one who hurt us. They may not respond the way we would like, but it frees us to let go of our bitterness and resentment, the weeds which have choked out peace and its fruit of joy.

Ephesians 6:10-13 states the truth that we do battle against spiritual forces. We cannot possibly stand against Satan in our own strength and power. These verses remind us that we

need to depend on God to give us His strength, not to beef up our own strength. The way Jesus stood up against the enemy was by speaking the Word of God. In the same way, when I am fighting a battle of anger, I can use God's Word to resist Satan so he will flee (I Peter 5:3,9). In my anger I can choose not to sin. I will not let the sun go down on my wrath today. I will go to _____ and confess my anger and seek to work things out.

Anger means a part of us is feeling vulnerable and needs protection. Our anger in response to injustice or mistreatment can be righteous anger, a necessary response to give us the courage and boldness to stand up against what is wrong. But more often, our anger serves as protective armor, a defense mechanism we use to keep our vulnerable parts from being hurt. As we learn to "speak the truth in love", being true to ourselves, not "loving" out of guilt or intimidation, but saying no honestly, we begin to become free to really love. Over time our protective armor of anger can be shed. What a weighty burden is lifted when we no longer need that heavy armor of anger to protect us.

God's Guidance

Isaiah 30:21, "And your ears will hear a word behind you, 'This is the way, walk in it', whenever you turn to the right or to the left. (NASB)

Decisions we have to make are often simple and clear cut as in making a choice of preference or decisions with no moral implications. Other decision involving choices between right and wrong are usually not difficult in terms of knowing what God wants us to do; the difficulty comes in submitting our will to His. But in many of the decision we face, God's will for us is obscure and though we want to follow Him, the way is not clear. God assures us in His Word that He has plans for our lives. Jeremiah 29:11-13, "For I know the plans I have for you,

says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. You will find me when you seek me, if you look for me in earnest. (TLB) He also promises His guidance to us. Psalms 32:8, “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye.” (KJV)

Asking God to show us His will when the way is not clear is the place we need to start knowing He has promised his guidance. “Let me hear Thy lovingkindness in the morning; for I trust in Thee; teach me the way in which I should walk; for to Thee I lift up my soul.” Psalm 143:8 (NASB). How often my first response is to begin reasoning with my own analytical mind and seeking the counsel of others without ever remembering to pray. We can ask for His wisdom to guide our decision-making process, but we are admonished to ask in faith, believing that God will answer. “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.” James 1:5-6 (NASB)

One of the most difficult decisions I ever had to make was choosing between treatment options after my recurrence with cancer. I suppose some medical decisions are more clear-cut but in both experiences with cancer, the doctors put the decisions in my lap. Yes, they had strong recommendations, but the choices were clearly my responsibility. Many women I have talked with have shared my experience and frustration with having the burden of responsibility for treatment decisions when simply coping with the news of having cancer and all its implications is overwhelming in itself. Some of the wisdom I asked God for in that time of decision-making was how to go about making a wise choice, and what He showed me has helped me in making other decisions.

The whole process must begin with prayer, each step is brought to Him in prayer, and it ends with prayer. My next step was to gather as much information as I could concerning the choices I had before me, a sort of pros and cons list for all options. Then I found everyone had an opinion about my decision, so I needed to prayerfully choose who I would listen to. Who was knowledgeable, who did I trust, who had godly counsel? Once I stepped out in faith on the decision that seemed to be right for me, God confirmed my decision with a sense of peace. A sense of unsettledness and restlessness can be the Spirit's way of speaking to us to reconsider the decision we have made, but it could be Satan causing doubt. Once I had a sense that God had confirmed my decision with His peace, I chose to never look back on my decision and say "what if...or, if only..." I went forward and fought the battles on the path I had chosen.

On Perspective

During a period of great turmoil in my life when Dad and I did not agree on a decision he wanted to make, I went to our pastor's wife with my burden seeking her wisdom and advice. What she told me that day can be summed up by the verse which says, "Be still and know that I am God." Psalms 46:10 When we focus our minds on who God is and look at our problems and concerns through the lens of His many attributes, then we can have God's perspective on our difficulty.

Perfect Love

None of us grew up with perfect parents, but we seem to have a built in sense that having parents who loved us perfectly is one of our inalienable rights, so we all start out with some anger toward our "imperfect parents". Even our best attempts as parents leave emotional

wounds in our children because we are humans and can't be perfect. We hurt our children with our shortcomings, our character flaws and our sinfulness. Not all of our negative feelings are based on real hurts, however, Some are a result of our distorted childhood perceptions. I remember a time when one of you whined about not getting a treat at the grocery store. After being reminded that you couldn't expect to get something on every trip to the store, you pouted and cried all the way home, and for a good half hour after we got home! Being tired that day contributed to your overly sensitive feelings, but you expressed feeling we were being mean to you and treating you unfairly. What cruel parents we were in your eyes that day!

Many people get stuck in blaming their past (primarily their parents), allowing the past to retain its grip on them. They feel angry about not having been loved perfectly, something not humanly possible. Underneath their anger are more vulnerable feelings of disappointment, hurt and sadness. Some people feel intense rage over the profound hurt from parents who were incapable of loving them because of their own wounds. Others not only lived without love, but with heinous abuse, and often a blank numbness protects the person from their overwhelming emotions.

Growing up in a home where love and discipline were consistent gave me a stable foundation and security I am truly grateful for. We did the best to provide you with the same. But even with that kind of foundation, I grew up knowing without any doubt that I was loved, but lacking in feeling as loved as I needed. I grew up with a lot of confidence in my competencies and abilities, but insecurity in my relationships with people I did not know well. I blamed my parents for my struggles and remember in college finding freedom from that burden when I accepted that they were not (and could not have been) perfect parents, and I forgave

them. With no one to blame, the question I was confronted with was what was I going to do about my insecurities?

Some people spend their lives blaming their parents for their unhappiness and trying fruitlessly to change them or others in an attempt to get the love they feel lacking. Their anger keeps them from being free to find the love they are seeking. That anger begins to loosen its grip when we allow ourselves to grieve over our sadness and hurt over not being loved perfectly. As the anger loosens its grip, we have a choice to cling to it, or to begin to let it go. Our anger over not having our needs for attachment and bonding fully satisfied gets in the way of being able to bond in positive ways.

As children we are dependent on others to meet our needs, but part of becoming an adult is taking responsibility for oneself and that includes taking responsibility for our own needs, learning balanced dependency. I am not saying I am responsible to meet all of my own needs all on my own, but that growing up means taking responsibility to see that they are met, not leaving that responsibility to others. I cannot meet all of my own emotional, spiritual, and physical needs. I need others, and above all, I need God.

As I let go of my anger over unfulfilled expectations from others, I become free to ask and seek and find. I can ask instead of demanding from others. I can seek after God and find in Him all that I need to satisfy my thirsty soul. He is the one who loves me perfectly, unconditionally. He is the perfect parent my heart desired.

Then I become free to truly love others. When we seek to be loved by others, to satisfy our self-centered need, we turn others away. Our neediness scares others away. But when we find our need to be loved satisfied in God, then we become free to enter into deeply loving relationships with others. We can be vulnerable without fear because we are secure in God's

love, opening the door for others to love us in places we would otherwise keep hidden. And because our soul is being filled more and more with God's love, our self-centeredness diminishes, freeing us from the constant burden of self-seeking love to mutually meeting one another's needs, and even self-sacrificing love.

A Mother's Day greeting for Jonathan and Robert

It's Mother's Day, so you're probably wondering why I'm giving you guys a card. When I was out walking I was thinking if it weren't for you, I wouldn't be a Mom, so I wanted to thank you for what great kids you are. I'm so glad I'm your mom and that God has given me so many years with you. Thanks for your hugs, they mean a lot. Thanks for shaving my head, and helping me to laugh instead of cry. It's encouraging to me to see the way you're growing as Christians and reading your Bibles. I also love to see you enjoying playing music, you guys have been easy to raise (so far anyway!) I'm thankful for that. It's been fun to be your Mom at every age, and I look forward to the years ahead with you.

Love,

Mom