

Hi Mom!- Rare Qualities of Motheringⁱ

I recall your sincere trust, the same trust that your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice had first; and I am convinced that you too now have this trust (2 Timothy 1:5)

She cooks, she cleans, she comforts, she corrects. She has six pairs of hands, and eyes in the back of her head. Mother. For some, this word conjures up images of June Cleaver, complete with lace apron and pearls—singing lullabies, baking brownies, kissing away a child's hot tears. Others envision one who drives a wood-paneled station wagon and whose life is work. Whatever the type, no one has more influence than a mother. For better or worse, she will forever impact the life of her child.

Tough and tender, wise and warm, a mother must be all things to all her family..., at all times. That's quite a job description, and anyone who is a mother or has watched one in action knows there's no career more demanding ... or more endangered in today's society. What are the increasingly rare qualities of mothering that are essential to building and preserving the home.

Tools a Mother Needs

All homes must be built on a firm foundation. In Proverbs 24:3-4 we see some of the tools needed to establish a rock-solid home: "By wisdom a house is built, by understanding it is made secure, and by knowledge its rooms are filled with all kinds of costly and pleasant possessions."

Sh'lomo HaMelech is suggesting that homes are built with three primary tools: wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. Wisdom is the ability to see with discernment, to view life through G-d's eyes. Wisdom is what you would do if you had all of the information, past, present, and future (and G-d does have that information). Understanding is the skill of responding with insight, reading between the lines. Knowledge is learning with perception—having a teachable spirit, a willingness to learn. Even from our children.

Tenderness

Rabbi Sha'ul first mentions Timothy's tears: "I am reminded of your tears, and I long to see you, so that I might be filled with joy." (2 Timothy 1:4) Then he remembers Timothy's tenderness, a trait likely passed down from his mother. In fact, most of us learned tenderness from our mothers, while our dads taught us diligence and toughness. From Dad we learned the value of a dollar, the significance of honesty, the importance of standing alone when everything turns against us. But we learned transparent tenderness from Mom.

Mom, don't lose that quality—it's one of your greatest contributions to your family. Your warm embrace, eager smile, and soft reply will be a safe harbor for the child who's tossed and battered by life's stormy seas.

Real Faith (Trust)

In 2 Timothy 1:5 the Greek term for sincere is *anupokritos*, which means "unhypocritical." Nothing phony here; it's real, lived-out faith. *Rabbi Sha'ul* knew the sincere faith modeled in Mama Eunice and Grandma Lois had impacted Timothy: "But you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, recalling the people from whom you learned it; and recalling too how from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which can give you the wisdom that leads to deliverance through trusting in Yeshua the Messiah." (2 Timothy 3:14-15). That's the way real and

authentic spirituality works. Congregations, schools, and friends can give children the facts, the words to say. But those words won't fit reality unless G-d's truth is translated at home.

Inward Confidence

“For this reason, I am reminding you to fan the flame of G-d's gift, which you received through s'mikhah from me. For G-d gave us a Spirit who produces not timidity, but power, love and self-discipline.” (2 Timothy 1:6-7) In the Greek language, the word power includes “inherent strength” and “inner might.” Notice that timidity is not a desirable trait—it's a synonym for insecurity or inferiority. It's amazing how our children can sense our own attitude toward self—and how they will emulate it, for good or for bad. One of the reasons Timothy stayed true to the Scriptures and stood strong in his ministry was because he had learned inner confidence from his mother.

Mom, do you know that G-d wants to use you to build healthy self-esteem in your child? Note these words from family expert and psychologist Dr. James Dobson: *“It is a wise adult who understands that self-esteem is the most fragile characteristic in human nature, and once broken, its reconstruction is more difficult than repairing Humpty Dumpty.”*

Although our task is more difficult for some children than for others, there are ways to teach a child of his genuine significance, regardless of the shape of his nose or the size of his ears or the efficiency of his mind. Every child is entitled to hold up his head, not in haughtiness and pride, but in confidence and security. This is the concept of human worth intended by our Creator. How foolish for us to doubt our value when He formed us in His own image!

When the child is convinced that he is greatly loved and respected by his parents, he is inclined to accept his own worth as a person. Inner confidence, like transparent tenderness and authentic spirituality, is passed down from generation to generation ... as in Timothy's life, from grandmother to mother to son. How's your self-esteem, Mom? Are you taking the time to cultivate a positive self-image in your child?

Unselfish (Genuine) Love

Verse 7 contains another gift from G-d—a gift every one, and especially mothers, can emulate. *“But He has given unto us ... the Spirit of Love...”* This kind of love—Greek *agape*—seeks the highest good of the other person. It needs to be evident in every facet of your life, Mom. And your love shows through in two ways especially. First, in your sense of humor—when you laugh in the midst of pressure and refuse to take yourself too seriously, which gives your child a more positive and unthreatening environment to grow in. And second, in your sense of insight—when you listen to hurts and hear what isn't said, showing your child that you care and want to help. In another letter *Rav Sha'ul* devoted an entire chapter to the subject of genuine love (1 Cor. 13). One mother has written a paraphrase that aptly describes this essential ingredient of mothering.

If I talk to my children about what is right and what is wrong, but have not love, I am like a ringing doorbell or pots banging in the kitchen. And though I know what stages they will go through, and understand their growing pains, and can answer all their questions about life, and believe myself to be a devoted mother, but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give up the fulfillment of a career to make my children's lives better, and stay up all night sewing costumes or baking cookies on short notice, but grumble about lack of sleep, I have not love and accomplish nothing.

A loving mother is patient with her children's immaturity and kind even when they are not; a loving mother is not jealous of their youth nor does she hold it over their heads whenever she has sacrificed for them. A loving mother does not push her children into doing things her way. She is not irritable, when the chicken pox have kept her confined with three whining children for two weeks, and does not resent the child who brought the affliction home in the first place.

A loving mother is not relieved when her disagreeable child finally disobeys her directly and she can punish him, but rather rejoices with him when he is being more cooperative. A loving mother bears much of the responsibility for her children; she believes in them; she hopes in each one's individual ability to stand out as a light in a dark world; she endures every backache and heartache to accomplish that.

A loving mother never really dies. As for home-baked bread, it will be consumed and forgotten; as for spotless floors, they will soon gather dust and heel marks. And as for children, well, right now toys, friends, and food are all-important to them. But when they grow up it will have been how their mom loved them that will determine how they love others, in that way she will live on.

So care, training, and a loving mom reside in a home, these three, but the greatest of these is a loving mother.

Self-control

Take a final look at 2 Timothy 1:7: "...self-discipline (a sound mind)" Good moms balance tenderness and love with discipline. They set parameters and know when it's time to say, "That's it; that's enough." In his excellent book *Hide or Seek*, James Dobson tells the story of a research project conducted by Dr. Stanley Cooper-Smith, associate professor of psychology at the University of California. After studying 1,738 middle-class boys and their families over a number of years, Cooper-Smith identified three important differences between the families of boys with high self-esteem and those with low self-worth.

First, the high-esteem children were more loved and appreciated at home. Their parents' love was deep and real; their words had substance. Second, and perhaps most revealing, the high-esteem group had parents whose approach to discipline was significantly more strict. They taught self-control. In contrast, the parents of the low-esteem group were much more permissive, creating a sense of insecurity. These boys were more likely to feel that no one cared enough to enforce the rules. Third, the high-esteem group had homes that were characterized by democracy and open communication. Once boundaries had been established, the boys had the freedom to ask questions and express themselves in an environment of acceptance.

Mom, don't underestimate the value of teaching self-control. In your discipline, you are building your children's character, enhancing their self-esteem, and helping them learn to be responsible for themselves. Children see what G-d's love is all about through their parents, especially their mothers, since they spend the most time with them. Mom, when you laugh, your children hear G-d laugh. When you cry, they see Him cry. Never doubt the value of your role. Without your positive, supportive partnership, the family could not survive.

To all the courageous and outstanding moms in Kol Simcha, we salute you! May you have a most blessed mother's day. 'Adonai bless you and keep you...'

ⁱ Adapted from *The Strong Family*, Chuck Swindoll, May 1997