

Life Lessons From Mother:

How God enables us to face life's challenges with faith and persevering love.

The late summer sun slanted across our deck, casting soft shadows through the large glass door in our kitchen. The table, set for four, was filled with food. I wanted it to be special because Mom and Dad were visiting from Texas. I invited them to the table and watched as Mother tried to negotiate this simple procedure. It was difficult for her. She was five feet ten inches tall and couldn't bring her long legs under the table. When she finally did, she turned and gave me the most irrepresible smile, as if to say, "Look! I did it!"

I was shocked into awareness of how serious Mother's condition was. My father had conveyed the facts of her memory loss and deterioration of coordination and manual skills, but I didn't realize her Alzheimer's was progressing so rapidly.

My mother was an elegant lady. By nature she was quiet and shy, but she had a delightful sense of humor. However, she said very little that night, seemingly content to listen to the conversation. Later, my father asked if we had noticed how little she spoke during dinner. Then he explained that she didn't talk much anymore because she was aware of her illness and didn't want to repeat stories over and over again. She had always demonstrated such sweet dignity I understood she didn't want to be embarrassed.

Because of mother's illness, my parents were moving to our city where they could be near my sister and me. The next afternoon, my husband and my father went to look once again at a house my dad had decided to buy while they were gone, Mother sat in a chair, leafing through a magazine. She turned a few pages, briefly looking at the pictures and put it down. I knew she could not comprehend what she was reading. Suddenly she stood to her feet and started to walk toward the door. She turned to me with a puzzled look on her face and said, "Where is my husband?"

"Mother", I said, "he went to look at your new house again. He'll be home soon." At that moment we heard the garage door going up. Mother went to the kitchen doorway and looked toward the back hall. When the door opened and my father walked into the kitchen, she stared at him intently for a moment. Then she walked over to him quickly threw her arms around him, and kissed him passionately!

As she finished, Dad (with a flush on his face) said, "My, what did I do to deserve that?"

My mother impishly laughed and said, "I call them like I see them. When I recognize him, I kiss him!" We all laughed delightedly. She had not lost her sense of humor!

The next day Mother tried to talk to me about what was happening to her. An accomplished musician, she shared her pain over losing the ability to play her violin. She had been able to play almost any song she heard. Her music had been a source of pleasure and comfort for years, but now she was afraid to play in public.

I reached across to comfort her as the tears slipped down

by Carolyn Lunn

her face. She said, "My friend, Naomi, told me to keep on practicing, to hold on to my music. So I'm going upstairs to my room now to practice. I'm determined to play as long as I can."

Slowly and laboriously we climbed the stairs to her room. As I prepared the evening meal, I could hear her tune up her violin and then she began to play. She kept playing a song over and over. I knew she was having trouble remembering the music, but she didn't give up. She kept going over and over it until she remembered a little more. In former days her music had been smooth and melodic. Now her lack of dexterity made the bow screech and the notes were not true.

It was more than I could handle. My mother's violin playing was one of the sweetest memories I had of my childhood. Tears rolled down my face as I listened to her. What a gutsy lady! I thought. Most people would have given up, but she's determined to be a part of life as long as she can!



Mother had always lived that way. As a result of my birth and complications afterwards, mother had a blood circulatory condition in her legs. She often suffered with ulcers on her ankles because of poor circulation and needed almost complete bed rest until the ulcer healed—each time. Never once during my growing-up years did I hear my mother complain. She never blamed me for her troubles by saying, "If it hadn't been for your birth, I would be well!" I didn't even know it was my birth that caused her health problem until I was in my teen years.

Two weeks before Mother died, I was sitting beside her bed, holding her hand. She turned her head in my direction and gave me her beautiful smile and said, "Oh-h-h!" She had not known who I was before that moment, but in that instant, she knew me.

I stood up beside the bed and leaned over to take her sweet face between my hands and said, "Mother, I love you so much. You are the best mother a girl could ever have. I want you to know that you are the most significant person in my life! You nurtured me in my faith and in my personhood. I don't know what would have happened to me without you! Thank you, Mother, for being you!"

The only way she could respond was with her radiant smile. The tears began to flow down her face and I knew she understood me. But in an instant she was gone, back into that mind-numbing world. I'd had only a few moments, but I had been given a priceless gift, the chance to say thank you to a loving, wise mother for a life lived abundantly!

"I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of." John 10:10, *The Message*.

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