

## MY MOTHER THE HOOD

Pay no attention to the title of this article. It's not true. I just couldn't resist putting a different spin on an article about Motherhood. Actually, quite the opposite is true. My mother was the quintessential 1950's stay-at-home-white-bread-June Cleaver model, complete with pearls and a tiny waist. She was a home economics major in college for cryin' out loud! She cooked from "scratch."

I was a teenager before I realized most folks actually went to a department store to buy their clothes. If she could have sewn our shoes, she would have. She made everything we wore and we looked black and white picture perfect. But we all know appearances can be deceiving.

She was so good at running a well-kept household and raising well-mannered children that she was rewarded with a massive stroke at the ripe old age of 39. That's not a misprint.

I was only eleven at the time. I didn't know it then, but watching her have to relearn how to walk and talk and do simple math taught me something. Without realizing it, my brain split into two columns and overnight I acquired a new skill. I could quickly size up what was truly important and what wasn't. Almost immediately most things went onto the "will this matter in a day, a week, a month?" side. Interestingly it was several times longer than the other column.

As I grew older and started my own family, having my house pass the white glove test fell squarely on the "nice but not necessary," side. There are a lot of those things. Nice, and you might as well shoot for it, but don't kill yourself over them, type things.

A few, however, seemed very necessary. Finding the right church and the right school and having regular "family" nights became a top priority. Teaching our children that it is God who is our provision, not our paycheck; that no need is too small to take to Him; that this life is only preparation for the one to come and while this one is short, the other never ends.

We let them buy their own cars and insurance even though we could have done it for them because they needed to learn how to live in the real world of responsibility and money management and not a false one of being handed everything without working for it. I did my best to have them to not be too hurried or harried to maintain relationships and help others. I tried to help them learn that the most important things in life are other people, our character and what we accomplish for God's kingdom. They are the only things that we take with us when we blink and find ourselves in eternity.

Was the house a little messy at times? Yeah, and I didn't like it so I taught them even more life skills like how to clean a toilet, dust a room from the top down, load the dishwasher and wash their whites in hot water and their colors in cold.

Oh they griped all right. All three of them were convinced the only reason I had them was so I wouldn't have to do any house or yard work. But it paid off.

Are they perfect? Of course not. Did I do everything right? Not even close, and what I did do "right" was only by God's grace. But somehow I managed to raise three children who love and serve Jesus and that was my goal. Jordan is with the Lord now, his life on earth completed just before he turned 22. Jacob is a sophomore in college and

will spend his summer in a discipleship-training course in Chicago. Jessie graduates in May and come August, my nest will be empty. I could only vaguely imagine this day not-so-long-ago as an excited young mother, and now it is pointing its bony finger directly at me.

Friends who have gone before me tell me I will actually get used to and enjoy a quiet house. We'll see. Right now it just seems odd and a bit lonely. I will be ready for the pitter-patter of tiny feet when my kids start reproducing. I hear the grandkid years are the best!

And so, the cycle will continue, yet the work isn't done and the goal remains the same.