

# Thoughts on Mothering

■ by Charlene Brouwer, MA, LAMFT



“Time is the only thing we all share in common,” so the saying goes. We all have the same 24 hours in a day. It is our use of that time that differs. I would add something else we all have in common: we were all born to a mother. It is our experience of “mothers” that varies tremendously.

There are many types of mothers. There are birth moms, adoptive moms, foster moms, step-moms and grandmothers. In our culture today there are descriptive references such as tiger mom, gym mom, martyr mom, and helicopter mom. As a Marriage and Family Therapist, I am grateful to come alongside clients as they work on their unique concerns related to mothering. Here are a few examples:

- Grandmothers raising their grandchildren while their parents battle addictions
- Single moms moving back to live with their parents in order to make it financially
- Adults caring for their elderly mothers who suffer from dementia
- Teens and their moms learning to resolve conflict and improve their relationship
- Adults grieving the death of their mother or grandmother
- Mothers grieving estranged relationships with their adult children
- Mothers seeking positive parenting techniques

As human beings, we are dependent on others - from birth through adulthood - for our existence and survival. We thrive when our needs for physical and emotional safety and comfort are met. While those needs can be met through a variety of people and relationships, our healthy attachment to a primary mothering figure is powerfully significant.

What does “mothering” mean? What does it mean to you? Synonyms include words like nurture, protect, tend to, take care of, watch, nurse, and treasure. These are all positive words. It is our nature to crave this kind of mothering.

But it’s also our human nature to be imperfect. We fall short daily, often disappointing ourselves and others. Our mothers fell short too, sometimes in devastating ways. At times we experience the opposite of mothering, such as neglect, hurt, disregard and injury.

Jesus understands our humanity. He wants us to come to him to be tended to, to be nurtured and protected. I love the mothering imagery Jesus used in his words recorded in Luke 13:34, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.”

Are we willing to come to Jesus with our pain and disappointment related to mothering? To come to him with our regrets and failings, our wounds and scars, our feelings of hopelessness and despair? He longs to gather us close to him, to cover us in his perfect and unconditional love. ■



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