

CHRISTIAN HEADS, HEARTS, AND HANDS

ARTICLES TO FORM US AS FOLLOWERS OF “THE WAY”

When Mommy Grows Up

By Leah Farish

With every succeeding Mother’s Day, I am challenged to reevaluate my role in my kids’ lives. Now that they are taller than I am, I am thinking perhaps it’s time for a “laying off of hands” ceremony.

It’s a hard thing to launch people into the world when you secretly know that they have to spend ten minutes every morning smoothing that cowlick down, or that they harbor a spectacular fear of clowns.

Yet you may be overrating the importance of your constant supervision and guidance. One day I took my son out for a special meal and was gazing at him through my spectacles, giving him lots of earnest advice. I was aware of his intense returning gaze, so I was confident that my wisdom was profoundly impacting him. When at length I paused for a breath, he said, “Wow—have you ever noticed how when you look at somebody who wears glasses, you can, like, see *around* them?”

At the risk of your seeing around me, I offer here some words of wisdom to help you in your own laying off of hands.

1. Just because they are your children doesn’t mean they are children.

A few years ago I was working as an attorney on a case, and the mother of one of the parties was talking about her daughter and the daughter’s boyfriend, the wrongdoers in the case. “They’re just kiiiids,” she drawled indulgently. I had to remind her that these “kids” were 22 years old who had kids of their own, which was why we were all at the courthouse.

I inwardly recalled a friend of mine saying, “You’re not raising kids; you’re raising men and women.” That meant that my husband and I held them to high standards and disciplined them carefully. On the other hand, it also humbled us, keeping us alert to their callings and gifts beyond, and unrelated to, our own.

2. At some point we have to swap the intimacy we had with our kids for deeper relationships with others and with God.

Being a mother is such an intimate thing; for years you smelled their hair and monitored potty training and kept track of which one couldn’t eat strawberries or listen to scary stories. They knew you liked to have your back scratched and that it’s unhealthy to lick cake batter off the spoon—so only Mommy could do it! But at some point we have to lay off our hands and let those dear intimacies become dear memories. Meanwhile, our marriages and other relationships can grow. For most of us, the time we will live after kids are grown and gone is at least as many years as the time they were under our roof. That’s decades for development in new directions. One friend of mine is learning Hebrew—at age 75.

3. *Lean in to God in letting go of them just as much as you leaned in to Him while raising them.*
One of my favorite prayers is Psalm 84:

*How lovely is your dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs, yes, faints
for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and flesh sing for joy
to the living God.
Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in your house,
ever singing your praise!*

Notice several things mothers can take from this poem: first is the awestruck appreciation of the beauty and majesty of the future home of all God's people. For the Israelite, the Temple was the place of God's presence. This world is not our home; our final destination is eternity in the presence of God. The psalmist here relished the satisfaction of the heart, soul, and even flesh that the Lord provides. This is the true hope and home for moms.

Second, He is a living God. Jesus refers to God calling Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and concludes that He is the God of the living and not the dead. The amazing thing about that is Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were dead! (Mark 12:26-27 ESV) Yet Jesus is so confident of the resurrection—of “the life in Himself” (John 5:26) — that He refers to them as living! Here is a God we can trust with our children's future, and their past. Through all the changes they will experience, our living God will be with them.

Lastly, this passage tells us that God's presence is a place of safety for His people because we belong to Him. We are safe in His presence, just as a sparrow is safe in the shelter of the temple. As Jesus said, “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10: 29, 31). We can trust our Father to shelter our families.

When the time is right, we have to—we are privileged to—launch our children from our knees. And as we do, we entrust them into the hands of our living God.