

Dear Friends,

Today we begin to celebrate Mother's Day weekend. It is a time to celebrate mothers and grandmothers. We take this moment to consider the love, compassion, care and comfort of the moms and grandmas in our lives. Each and every one of us is deeply grateful for the support and encouragement our mothers have given us. We sometimes marvel at their ability to listen, learn, love and look out for us.

Each of you will have extraordinary memories of your mother or grandmother during this weekend. Some of you will remember how they taught you to tie your shoes, print, do math and even simple science experiments. Some of you will have memories of your favourite vacation. Some will be able to remember your first day at school as your mom held your hand walking down the road to drop you off at school for the first time. Some will have memories of the look on your mom's face while she attended hockey, baseball, dance, soccer, football, lacrosse, basketball, rugby or track and field. Sometimes it makes you wonder, how did they do it all?

I was watching the news the other day when the government announced that this would be a virtual Mother's Day. I know that makes this Mother's Day different from many others. Some of you will use zoom, livestream or the telephone to communicate with your families. Some of you will take the time to look through old photo albums to refresh your memories of some of the best times of your life. Some of you will be keenly aware that your mom is not there, or that your grandmother has been gone for quite some time. My thoughts and prayers are with you in the midst of your grief.

At the age of 56, I find myself still humming a tune that my mom taught me when I was about 5 years old. The words went like this, "Be kind to your fine feathered friends, they might be somebody's mother." It took years for me to ask my mom what that meant. It was then that she began to pour her virtue and values into me about being a kind, gentle and generous person. I remember the many life lessons that she taught me. I remember her patience and her perseverance. I remember her lesson that every life needed a purpose. I was also blessed with two grandmothers. Grandma Betty was a baker. She believed that happiness was found in good food. Many images of her come to mind as she taught each of her five children how to cook. As the eldest of seventeen grandchildren, I still remember the life lessons taught to me while baking a cake. Grandma Alice was a healthcare provider at a huge hospital in the United States. In her office were the photographs of all the children for whom she and her medical team were providing cancer care. I always experienced her to be friendly, warm, considerate and respectful. I recall her phone calls to my mother on Sunday afternoons at 1:00pm. These calls came every week to reassure my mother that she was doing a good job and to keep on keeping on.

If you would have grown up in our house, you would know that according to Joyce, every experience could provide a life lesson. Sometimes I wasn't sure if the lesson was for one of our children or for me. What I do know is that thanks to her, we have raised strong, independent, self-reliant young adults. I think it was Joyce's extraordinary parenting skills that she got from her grandmothers. They too were strong, independent, self-reliant, compassion women.

I continue to be surrounded in amazing, talented, gifted, dependable moms. If you are one of those mothers or one of those grandmothers and are reading this letter, please know that you have been a source of inspiration and encouragement to the children and grandchildren in your midst. They have seen your love and your faith in action. Someday you will hear the words from our heavenly Father, "Well done, good and faithful servant". Meanwhile, enjoy the fruit of your labour and the blessings that come with knowing that you have truly given it everything you have to ensure their success in life.

Blessings  
Stephen