

A Mother's Day Tribute To My Grandmother

by LaBreeska Hemphill



A **Mother** according to *Webster*, is a woman who has born a child, or one who nurtures, having responsibility and authority over a child, such as a step-mother, an adoptive mother, etc...

Because of my parent's divorce when I was four, there were several "mothers" that had a hand in raising me. My birth mother, my step-mother, and my two spirit-filled grandmothers. Each of these women are very dear to me, even though they are no longer with us, and made positive deposits into my character. In this article I have chosen to introduce *Mama Rogers*, one of my precious grandmothers, to commemorate Mothers Day. She was *the ultimate* example of the word **Mother**. Some of the things that I have written here are excerpts about her from my latest book *My Daddy Played The Guitar*.

The Proverbs 31 Woman

"Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies...She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her...Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:10-30).

The Art of Loving

I stood at the kitchen sink, gazing out the window at the hubbub of activity in our backyard. The birds were chirping and flitting, and the bushy tails were scampering from tree to tree. Blue Jays were musically at war, staking their claims in the canopy of green. Summer had finally arrived and

the sun was splashing its warm, golden rays with dappled beauty, dazzling everything it touched. For a moment I marveled at God's magnificent creation. However my mood didn't match the festive scene before me. My mind was on Mama Rogers. It was hard to believe that my dear grandmother was really gone. Today I had an overwhelming desire, an aching need to talk with her, and wondered how I had let her slip away without learning her secret. I needed to know how she became the lovable, gracious, most even-tempered person I had ever known. All of the virtues that made her who she was loomed before me at that moment as unattainable.

Mama and Papa Rogers had lovingly taken me in with open arms when my parents divorced. They cushioned the separation from my mother with their affection. At the time that Dad and I moved in with them, they had several children still at home, to feed, clothe, and send to school. As I look back, I realize the extra work that our presence must have created; yet they included us and cared for me without hesitation.

The scenes that flash into mind when I think of my sweet grandmother are pleasant ones. The way she hummed around the house as she worked, bringing order to the chaos of howling grandbabies while helping one of her married daughters or daughters-in-law with their wash. I never saw a scowl or heard a harsh word from this gentle soul. That's not to say she couldn't demand orderly conduct from her children. She was an expert at that as well.

To rightfully describe Mama Rogers I would have to begin with her heart. It was as warm and ample as her lap that held and rocked me. I remember the well-scrubbed smell of soap, mixed with the delightful odors of starch and sunshine that were always with her and seemed to be her natural fragrance. The sound of her voice was as gentle and pleasant as laughter, as she doled out a well-balanced diet of love and discipline to her children.

Most importantly, Mama Rogers was a Christian, and that was no secret. Everyone that knew her knew she had a personal relationship with the Lord, and it blessed our whole family. Mama Rogers was not overly vocal about her Christian experience. It was mostly her demeanor that won me over and played a big part in my wanting to become a Christian at an early age.



She was a true saint and not one to complain about the hardships of life. When I came along, our nation was still recovering from the Great Depression. Life was a challenge with little to look forward to, but as Mama Rogers worked around the house she hummed a tune as if everything was fine. And it was, because she made it so. I remember watching her carry bucket after bucket of water and wash mountains of clothes on her rub-board. The little three-roomed house we rented on Papa's meager wages from the Alabama coal mines had no running water or bathroom, and the only heat was from the wood cook stove in the kitchen. Even in the leanest of times I cannot remember missing a meal, though many were meager.

Mama taught her children to work too. Saturday was house cleaning day. The first time I was expected to do my share, it was met with lazy defiance; but it didn't matter that I was only seven, this was a job for everyone. Participation was not an option. So Mama Rogers handed me the dust rag and supervised my training.

I also remember the feelings of accomplishment when the work was done. When the house was sparkling clean, I was proud of my part in making it happen.

I learned many things from that dear lady that have helped me through life. But on this given day I wondered why I had never probed her mind. Why hadn't I? I guess I took it for granted that she would always be there when I needed her. Even though I was raising my own family when she passed, I was too young to know the questions, much less look for answers. It's amazing how much the wisdom of our elders grows in our esteem as we get older.

It's like *Mark Twain* said about his father: "When I was sixteen my dad was so ignorant I could hardly stand to be around him. But by the time I was twenty-one, I was amazed at how much that old man had learned."

Well, I was out of answers. All I had was questions! I felt pulled in every direction. The demands of being a mother, wife, and homemaker were taking their toll on me. Not to mention our exhaustive

concert schedule that was in full swing. If only I could bury myself in the safety of Mama Rogers' arms again. I needed her to assure me that everything would be all right. To hear her say that she had faced some of the same struggles, and that I would make it.

I am happy to report that I finally came out from under that dark cloud. It took a while but the Lord takes us through the valley. He never intended for us to camp there. It took a lot of searching and praying, but I came up with some answers of my own.

I came to understand that life is like it is - not always like we want it to be. I also understood that my grandmother had discovered and mastered one of the great secrets of all time: the art of loving. With skill and expertise she had stroked the chords of our souls with her love. Even though we knew of her relationship with the Lord, what we did not realize was that we had been indirect recipients of God's love as she weaved her beautiful, selfless life into ours. This understanding challenged me to love as she had loved. To be the true woman of God that she had been. But the big question remained: Could I ever achieve such a high mark? The goal was set before me by a real flesh-and-blood "Proverbs 31 Woman." Sure Mama Rogers was human; she faced disappointment, opposition, and bone crushing adversity, as everyone does. Yet she remained unassuming and gallant. So it must be attainable, but can I do it?

Prayer:

*Lord I'm trying! Thank you Father that I knew such a lady and thank you that I was fortunate enough to have her as my grandmother, and to experience your love as it came through her to me. I am blessed! This woman's price **is** far above rubies. The heart of her husband trusted in her without disappointment. Strength and honor were her clothing and in her tongue was the law of kindness. Her children and grandchildren call her blessed, because she loved and feared the Lord.*
Amen.

Now, back to the question, "Can I achieve such a high mark set by my grandmother?" The answer is a resounding "**yes.**" It may take a lifetime, but by God's grace and with His divine help I can attain it, and so can anyone else!