

Birthdays and Mother's Day: What's a Kid to Do?



Do you wonder how your children will know to celebrate your birthday or Mother's Day? Hear from this single mom how she had to change her mindset about her birthday and then Mother's Day.

by Linda Ranson Jacobs

I woke in anticipation of the day ahead. It was my first birthday as a single mom. It was Sunday morning, and my kids and I got up and started getting ready for church. At the time they were 9 and 13 years of age. I kept waiting for them to say, "Happy Birthday, Mom" and give me something. They didn't say a word! We went to church, came home, and they still didn't acknowledge my birthday. Not only did they not say anything, they acted like they didn't even know it was my birthday. I fixed them lunch, and then I left. I took my self-righteous being to McDonalds and bought myself a birthday lunch.

Oh, I was mad! Just when I had spilled my guts to the Lord and complained at length about the audacity of my children forgetting my birthday and was ready to take a big bite, the Lord invaded my mind. The words came to me, "And just how were those children of yours supposed to know it was your birthday? They are just kids. They have no other adult in the home to tell them it's your birthday. Did you bother to tell them?" Ouch!

"Hey God," I said, "Aren't You being a little blunt? I thought You were supposed to have a tender heart for single parents. Come on, give me a break here, will You?" Silence! Not only silence, but an awkward heavy silence. I waited. More silence. God was not going to allow me to dwell in self-pity.

I realized that when I was married, I would alert their father that my birthday was coming up. He would tell the kids, take them shopping, etc. Now God was revealing an

important truth to me—I was it. The reality of parenting alone hit me again. I had to teach these children of mine. I mean, who else is there to teach them about the niceties of birthdays, anniversaries and other celebrations? I wanted to shout, "I can't do this by myself!" But in my heart I already knew what the Lord would say, "Of course not. I am here beside you. You have Me to help you parent." Knowing the Lord as intimately as I do, I think He probably would have added something like, "What are you doing sitting here at McDonalds? Get going. You've got work to do. Those kids are waiting." Sometimes God is unyielding, and this was one of those times.

I went home and told my children it was my birthday and that they hadn't acknowledged it in any way. My son said, "But Mom, we didn't know!" I explained that I had realized it and that I owed them an apology for being so hurt. It wasn't their fault they didn't know. I explained the Lord had revealed to me that I should have told them in advance. I also explained it was my responsibility as a parent to teach them things like this. Then my son said, "But Mom, I'm just a kid. I don't have any money, and I can't drive. What could I do?"

I said, "You are so right, son. So here's the deal. When it's getting close to my birthday, I'm going to let you know. I'll mark the calendar, and I will also tell you and make sure you know. And then you can do something for me or make me a card. Shoot, I don't care if you give me a card made out of toilet paper, just something. We have crayons and markers and scissors in the art box upstairs. Use them!" I also added that

Mother's Day was coming up in two months so they had a chance to redeem themselves.

Well, you know what those stinkers did for Mother's Day? They made me a card out of toilet paper. Oh my, it seemed miles long. My kids are now adults, and they have remembered my birthday every year, and they have remembered Mother's Day also. Down through the years they have made me breakfast in bed, given me coupons to do things around the house, picked a rose out of the yard and attached a card to the stem. The list goes on and on.

The year my daughter moved to England and was expecting a baby within a few weeks after the move was pretty hectic for her. She sent me a card on one day and a present on another day. When I called her, she said, "Well, I got all mixed up with the move and I couldn't remember just which day it was, so I covered myself on both days by sending a card one day and a present the other day."

As single moms it's hard not to feel slighted on Mother's Day and other special days. It was not God's intention that a mom should parent alone, but it is happening the world over. Instead of feeling hurt, ask God to help you parent your children. Ask your church to walk beside you and help you with your children. Make your church aware that a special day is coming up and you would like someone to help your children celebrate your day. Someone from church could drive your child to the local store to buy a card or help your child make you a card.

I continually say, "Thank you, God. Together, You and I have taught them well." I couldn't have done it alone. You don't need to do it alone either. Reach out and by doing so you will be allowing the Lord and others to teach your children.

© MMVI by the author and/or Church Initiative. All rights reserved. Reproducible only when used with a Church Initiative ministry program.

Linda Ranson Jacobs is the DC4K creator and developer. For more information, email info@dc4k.org. To discover more about DivorceCare for Kids or to find a DC4K group near you, go to www.dc4k.org.