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The Family Friend

A collection of articles and quotes to aid your family in daily living.

May, 2010

Reflections of a Mother

I gave you life, but I cannot live it for you.

I can teach you things, but I cannot make you learn.

I can give you direction, but I cannot be there to lead you.

I can give you freedom, but I cannot give account for it.

I can take you to church, but I cannot make you believe.

I can teach you right from wrong, but I cannot always decide for you.

I can buy you beautiful clothes, but I cannot make you beautiful inside.

I can offer you advice, but I cannot accept it for you.

I can give you love, but I cannot force it upon you.

I can teach you to share, but I cannot make you unselfish.

I can teach you respect, but I cannot force you to show honor.

I can advise you about friends, but I cannot choose

them for you.

I can advise you about sex, but I cannot keep you pure.

I can tell you the facts of life, but I can't build your reputation.

I can tell you about drinking, but I can't say "no" for you.

I can warn you about drugs, but I can't prevent you from using them

I can tell you about lofty goals, but I can't achieve them for you.

I can teach you about kindness, but I can't force you to be gracious.

I can warn you about sins, but I cannot make you moral.

I can love you as a child, but I cannot place you in God's family.

I can pray for you, but I cannot make you walk with God.

I can tell you about Jesus, but I can't make Jesus your Lord.

I can teach you how to live, but I cannot give you eternal life.

I can love you with unconditional love all of my life . . . And

I will !!!

Always, Mom

—Author unknown

The Family That Sings Together

Singing has been a part of my family life as long as I can remember. In my early childhood, we had an old hymnbook with the cover torn off. My mother frequently flipped through those pages and sang the hymns to me. My father was not famous for his musical ability. In fact he sang so poorly he refused to sing in church - He didn't want to throw anybody else off. Nevertheless, he frequently sang as he went about his work.

Some our earliest experiences with our children involved songs like "This Little Piggy Went to Market." My daughter and I have a special fondness for "Scarlet Ribbons" because I used to sing that to her when I rocked her to sleep.

During the years of their raising, we usually sang while we rode in the car together on our way to the church service. We started with "Jesus Loves the Little Children," progressed to

camp songs, Southern gospel, and the great traditional hymns of the church. They were grown by the time contemporary Christian music became the rage. Sadly, our singing stopped when we bought a car that came equipped with a tape deck. We let better singers do our singing for us. Then we got a second car, and didn't even ride to church together. The "singing-in-the-car" tradition was gone forever.

Recently it occurred to me that we don't sing much anymore. I've got an old guitar that I strum on sometimes. I don't think it has been out of the case more than once in the last six months. I used to sing while I was doing manual labor. When I'm in the car I often listen to talk radio, which doesn't do much to give encouragement. Now I've got an MP 3 player and I stick those ear buds in my ears, and let someone else entertain me while I'm working in the yard. No more singing while I work.

I'd like to see a revival of family singing. You may never market family singing CD's but you do have the prospect of building closer family bonds. Family singing provides an opportunity for meaningful shared experience. It creates good memories. In my mind, I can still hear my mother singing, "O Zion, Zion. I long thy gates to see...." Singing gives encouragement. Burdens seem lighter when there's a song on your lips. I've been thinking about how much I'm missing by leaving the guitar in the

case. I generally sing for my own "amazement." It really is amazement because I'm amazed at how much better I feel about things in my life after I've done it.

In Ephesians 5:19, Paul wrote, "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts." I generally hear that verse discussed in the context of church life. But might not it also provide encouragement to take advantage of this opportunity to enrich our families. I love what Ella Fitzgerald said, "The only thing better than singing is more singing." You don't have to be a gifted vocalist to sing. I'm convinced that people who sing, enjoy life more, and families who sing have a leg up on trying to maintain family harmony, in a world where confusion runs amok. We deprive ourselves of some wonderful enjoyment when we shut down singing.

I'll date myself when I refer to an old tune that was included in the repertoire of Frank Sinatra and Perry Como, among others.

I've got my trouble and woe,
But sure as I know the Jordan will roll.
We'll get along as long as the song
Is strong in my soul.

—Norman and Ann Bales

Touch Me; Love Me!

Touch me always when you pass my chair . . . Or when we sit together in a church assembly.

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Touch me early when I awake,
before the thoughts of the day's work come. Touch me softly when we sit to eat, and as we renew our physical strength, reach out and touch me again.

Cling to me when confusion closes in, at midday when the sun and temptations hold their heat against my mind.

Brush my hair when it is ill-arranged, or even when it is neatly in place. At night when I can only see the shadows, take me by the hand and let me know you are still there.

Touch me with your eyes,
that tell me all things are well . . .
Even when they are not.

Touch me with words , as "apples of gold in pictures of silver." Touch me as you have when you gave life to our children. Touch me as you touched the old woman at the nursing home, with a tenderness, an inner compassion.

Touch me when I am too proud to ask, too guilty to look, too ashamed to touch back.

When we quit speaking . . .
We quit touching. . .

When we quit touching . . .
We quit feeling . . .

When we quit feeling . . .
We die!

"God—save us from such a death!!"

—Jack Exum