

# WHY MOMS NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT

## JOHN 20:19-23

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Once, a pastor started his sermon with a line he hoped would grab his congregation's attention.

He said, "Some of the best years of my life were spent in the arms of a woman who was not my wife."

His opening worked! Everyone was shocked, until he added, "Of course, that other woman was my mother."

Well, a Bible College student was in the crowd that day, and thought to himself, "*what a catchy introduction.*" He vowed to use it in his first sermon.

When that day arrived, he intended to follow through, but he was so nervous. His knees were knocking as he spoke, “Some of the best years of my life were spent in the arms of a woman who was not my wife.”

That’s when the stage fright got the best of him. He froze. He lost his train of thought. Finally he mumbled, “And for the life of me, I can’t remember who she was.”

Well, I suppose we all could say, “I’ve spent some of the best years of my life in the arms of my mom.”

Today is Mother’s Day - and I want to thank you, mom, for all the love, and nurturing, and training, and nursing, and discipline you’ve provided your kids.

I hope I can bring you some encouragement.

For moms today, need all the help they can get. They need someone who understands the demands they face - can lend a helping hand - can give support.

And I’m not talking about a nanny - or grandma - or maid - or a caring friend - or even a helpful husband...

All that would be nice. No mom would turn it down. But even if a mom had that help, it wouldn’t be enough.

Every mother needs help from the person Jesus called our “Helper” - or “Comforter” - the One Jesus said would take up where He had left off. The title of today’s message is, “Why Moms Need The Holy Spirit.”

Certainly, being a mom is a tough job...

She’s on duty 24/7, 365 days a year. There’re no vacations, sick days, comp time, lunch hours, coffee breaks. A mom is saddled with constant concern.

She's always on the clock. Her shift is never over. Her days are long and the demands are relentless.

It's been said, "There is nothing easy about good mothering. It can be back-breaking, heart-wrenching, and anxiety-producing. And that's just the morning."

And even after a job well done, a mom doesn't always get the appreciation she deserves. There are days when being a mother is a truly thankless job.

It reminds me of the speaker at the women's conference. She spoke on *the Proverbs 31 woman – a woman of excellence*. She concluded by quoting the verse, "Her children shall rise up and call her blessed."

One tired, exasperated, young mother turned to her friend, and confessed, "So far my children just rise up and call me." Being a mom is an exhausting job!

Here's one mother's confession. She's entitled it, "*I Want To Be A Bear...*" "Bears get to hibernate. You do nothing for six months, but sleep. I could deal with that... Before you hibernate, you're supposed to eat yourself silly. I could deal with that, too..."

If you're a bear, your children are born the size of a walnut - and you birth them while you're sleeping. You awake to partially grown, cute, cuddly cubs. I could definitely deal with that... If you're a mama bear, everyone knows you mean business. You swat anyone who bothers your cubs. If your cubs get out of line, you swat them too. I could deal with that...

If you're a mama bear, your mate EXPECTS you to wake up growling. He also expects that you'll have hairy legs and excess body fat. Yep, I'd like to be a bear." Apparently, human mamas have a tougher job than even mama bears. Moms

definitely need help. But they need the right kind of help. They need a heavenly brand of assistance - **every mom needs the Holy Spirit.**

And it may surprise you, but the Holy Spirit knows exactly what a mother needs. One of the idioms used in the Scripture for the Holy Spirit is that of a dove.

At the baptism of Jesus the Spirit descended from heaven in the form of a dove. But this was not the first time God used this idiom for the Holy Spirit.

In Genesis 1:2, at the beginning of the creation, the Holy Spirit is said to be **“brooding over the waters.”** The image is that of a mother bird hovering over her chicks.

The gentleness of a dove speaks of motherhood, and many of the biblical terms associated with the Holy Spirit are idioms relating to *mothering* and *childbearing*.

In John 3 it's through the Spirit that we experience the new birth... Hebrews 5 talks about new believers receiving the milk of God's Word... And Galatians 4:19 compares the concern for others the Holy Spirit brings to our hearts, with an expectant mother's labor pains.

Don't anyone misunderstand my point. God is a *He*, and never a *she*. Whenever God speaks of Himself in the Bible He does so in masculine terms.

He is God the Father and God the Son. He's Israel's Husband - Bridegroom of the Church. The Bible refers to God with the personal pronouns – *He*, *Him*, and *His*.

God reveals Himself in the role of a male to illustrate His interaction with His people... God is to us, as a husband is to his wife. Like a male, God plants the seed

of His Word in our hearts. Like a female we receive it, and nurture it, and then bear fruit to God.

This is why the “*gender-neutral*” language used in some of the newer Bible translations is dangerous.

It’s a combination of political correctness and poor translation. It poses a serious threat to sound doctrine.

To pray, “Our Parent who is in Heaven” rather than, “Our Father...” - or to call Jesus “Child of God” instead of the “Son of God” strips the Bible of the vital meaning the roles of male and female were created to convey.

God speaks through gender. It’s how He’s chosen to reveal Himself. And *the Holy Spirit is a He, not a she.*

But having made that clear, the Holy Spirit shows the *tender*, and *sensitive*, and *compassionate*, and *comforting*, and *motherly* side of our Father’s nature...

Genesis 1:27 says that “God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Notice, male and female, are made in God’s image. The man’s maleness, or strength - *and* the woman’s femaleness, or sensitivity - are together reflections of the image of Almighty God.

You could put it this way, “God is a father, but a father with a mother’s heart.” He’s *tough and tender.*

One of my favorite passages is Isaiah 49. In verse 15 the Lord assures Israel, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb?”

**Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you."** God illustrates His feelings toward Israel with the metaphor of a nursing mom's concern for her son.

Her own body forces her to think about her child.

While she nurses, her breasts fill with milk in preparation for the child's next meal. She gets so full she can leak. It's impossible for her to forget her baby.

But according to Isaiah, a nursing mother would sooner forget her child than God would neglect His people. God is always thinking about His kids. Isaiah is saying that God is a Father with a mother's heart!

In fact, you could call God, **"the perfect single parent."** He combines *the strength of a father*, and *the sensitivity of a mother*... This was the heart of Jesus...

In Matthew 23, He spoke of His compassion toward Israel in maternal terms. **"How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings..."** Jesus yearns for His people, like a mother hen loves, and warms, and protects her chicks.

When Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would be *another Helper just like Him*, I'm sure He was thinking of the tenderness He shared with the Holy Spirit.

God is a He... but His Spirit loves us like a mom.

AB Simpson once wrote, **"Human fatherhood expresses a need which is met in God the Father. Human brotherhood, and the closer fellowship of husband and bride; are met in Christ, the Son of God. But human motherhood has its origin in the Holy Spirit."** Thus, the Spirit understands a mother's needs.

God reveals Himself in the masculine gender, but the Holy Spirit knows exactly what mothers feel. He empathizes with their concerns for their children. He shares

their heart. I believe a mom's heart comes from Him. A mother's love is a reflection of God's image.

Every mother knows she needs help! But in addition to *good books on parenting*, and *grandma's wisdom*, and *the advice of your friends*. A mother needs to learn to trust in and depend on God the Holy Spirit.

In John 20, Jesus took a deep breath and breathed on His disciples. In essence, He imparted to them something of Himself. *He took from deep within, and gave to His men*. In verse 22, He said, "Receive the Holy Spirit..." At that moment, the Holy Spirit that indwelt Jesus, took up residence in His followers.

But that was just part of His message. Jesus went on to say, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Let me give you the broad definition of what Jesus is doing; then I'll return and explain these specific words.

Jesus is assigning to His twelve disciples *a parenting function* in the early church. He called the original Apostles to *mother* the infant church - and who better to help them in this mothering role than the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit was given to mother the Church.

Certainly, whatever verse 23 means it speaks of a special authority. The disciples gain some heavy clout.

This was what the Jews called "binding and loosing."

Earlier in Matthew 18:18, Jesus bestowed on His disciples this same authority. He told them, “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

"Binding" and "loosing" were technical terms used by the leaders of Judaism. The rabbinical term... “*To bind*” meant “*to prohibit*” - “*to loose*” meant “*to approve*.”

Thus, binding and loosing was the authority to *raise or lower a standard* - to *make or lift a rule*. Here it includes the authority to *extend or retain forgiveness*.

This authority was needed to lead the new Church.

“Binding and loosing” was the basis that enabled the twelve disciples to establish a common faith and practice for the Christian Church. In the early days of Christianity a lot of issues had to be worked out...

*What about the relationship between law and grace?*

*How do you keep unity between Jews and Gentiles?*

*What about the times and manner of worship?*

*How would communion and baptism be carried out?*

*And what did a person have to do to be assured that God had forgiven their sins?*

*The Bible teaches us to repent and have faith. But what does that look like?*

The original disciples - with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit - received the authority to answer these questions for the early church, and keep it on track.

And it's interesting, the same questions and quandaries the early church faced are the same challenges a parent - *a mother* - has to figure out...

Here are some of the issues a good mom will face...



How do I establish standards of behavior for my kids, yet still show them my love? It's the same question the disciples asked, *how does grace and works interact?*

How do I teach my kids to get along with people different from them? When Jews and Gentiles first came together in Christ this was the pressing issue.

What about daily routines, and family traditions? This is what God's family had to hammer out. How did the old traditions of Judaism relate to their faith in Jesus?

And when a child disobeys, how and when does his parents extend forgiveness? The twelve disciples had to settle the same matter in the life of the new Church.

Jesus gave to His disciples the authority to **bind and loose** - but their ability to do so, came from the Holy Spirit. And for a mom to raise her family biblically, she too needs the Holy Spirit's wisdom and discernment.

Like the disciples, a mother has been entrusted by God with an awesome responsibility. She represents Jesus. But to do so clearly, she needs the Holy Spirit.

When my kids were school age we liked to go to the water park at Lake Lanier. Kathy would lead us to the beach – and find a place to drop off all our stuff.

But at that point all four kids would turn and look at their parents with eager anticipation. They were ready to play - *but first they needed parameters, boundaries.*

My kids knew to obey their parents. And at home they knew what that looked like. But in an unfamiliar environment like the water park, they needed us to lay out the boundaries, so they would know *how to obey.*

And so mom would start *binding and loosing...* "**Zack, you can ride this and can go there, but stay on this side of the lake...** **Natalie, this is okay, but that's off-limits, and**

don't leave this area... *Nick*, get a mat, but when you get to the top of the slide wait on me or dad... And *Mack*, you're not to leave this beach without us..."

And in those first few minutes at the water park, Kathy was able to size up the environment - take into consideration what was suitable for each of her kid's maturity level - *then apply obedience for each child...*

With the younger kids she was tighter and *more binding* – with the older kids she *loosen things up a bit*.

When it comes to kids, *one size doesn't fit all*.

What's appropriate for a child at one age, and in one environment, may not be appropriate two years later, or in a different situation. Enjoying our day at the beach required a mother to do some *binding and loosing*.

And this is the fine art of being a parent.

If all decisions in life were clear cut, parents wouldn't be needed. Just give the child a Bible and teach them to read. Life would be as easy as following a script.

But life is sometimes complicated. It's not clear cut. A child needs help applying the Scriptures - discerning right from wrong - and that's where a parent comes in.

A mom is always somewhere in the process of either *letting out the rope*, and giving her kids opportunities to learn - or she's *pulling that rope back in*, and tightening the screws, and binding a child to a stricter discipline.

This is why being a parent requires sensitivity...

If a mother never gives her child any freedom, and shelters him from making mistakes, that child will never learn vital lessons... But if you don't know when to reel

a child back in when freedom has been misused, you'll doom that child to a lifetime of repeated mistakes.

You've got to know when to *turn loose*, and when to *hold back*... As Kenny Rogers use to sing, "You got to know when to hold'em and know when to fold'em."

*Which had to do with gambling - not parenting. But sometimes the two pastimes are not that far a part...*

Moms have to know when to take a gamble with their child. Or better said, "when to trust a child to his own decision-making ability, even when it's still developing."

In the OT the questions facing Israel were easily answered. The nation lived under a set of Laws... their society was for Jews only... exact times for worship were spelled out... rituals were mandated... and everyone knew exactly when a person's sins were forgiven - *they saw the sacrifice burning on the altar...*

God answered all His people's questions through a system of rules and rituals. **Moses just laid down the Law.** There was no need for sensitivity. There was a rigid adherence. It was all there in black and white.

There was no ambiguity under the law - no room for personal discernment - no need for individual sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. It was one size fits all.

The only problem with the Law is it didn't produce loyal and loving kids. Under the Law of Moses the children of Israel rebelled against God over and over.

And this is what I find happens when parents choose *to lay down the Law*. Force your child into a rigid set of rules and regulations without any sensitivity to their

temperament, and maturity, and environment and you're going to foster rebellion in the heart of that child.

The kid might obey the rules for fear of being punished... but you haven't cultivated wisdom in that child, and a love for God, and a desire to please God.

And as soon as he tastes a little freedom - gets out from under mama's apron - gets a car or goes to college - he'll throw your rules to the wind, and do as he pleases. Mom, this is why God calls you to *mother*, not *smother* your child - and to do that you need sensitivity, wisdom, and *the help of the Holy Spirit!*

It's interesting when God started over in the NT, instead of laying down the Law - Jesus breathed on His disciples, and told them, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.**"

Rather than rules and rituals, God blessed the Church with a new relationship. He put His Spirit within us - and in doing so, planted His nature in our hearts.

No longer are God's people governed by Law and liturgies. From now on we're led by the Holy Spirit.

The law **smothers** God's children. Under the law we don't react well. We buck, and fight, and resist. Whereas, the Holy Spirit **mothers** us. He births in us something of Himself - a desire to love God and others.

In 2 Corinthians 3:17, Paul tells us, "**where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.**" Christians are free from the Law, to live in the Spirit. *Our God is like a mother.*

He interacts with a personal touch. He's sensitive to us and our development - our situation - our maturity.

Don't think of Christian discipleship as a college lecture hall with 500 students. To the contrary, the Holy Spirit tutors us one-by-one - intimately and individually.

Like a mom, the Holy Spirit takes us under His wing. Our faith is expressed by *leaning on Him, and learning from Him*. This is the way Christians grow spiritually.

And this is why moms need the Holy Spirit.

Mom, as you pour into the life of your child, the Holy Spirit will help you discern the needs, struggles, joys, hurts, questions, challenges your child will undergo.

The Spirit of God gives a mom the exact prescription for what ails her kids at each turn in their development.

God speaks into a child's life through his mom.

A mom assures her child of His love. She speaks truth and wisdom. She never gives up on her child.

And her influence doesn't stop when her child leaves home. Adult kids are never far from their mom's voice.

And here in John 20:23, in the upper room, the risen Lord Jesus, gave to His disciples what is a mom's most important responsibility... and her highest privilege...

On the cross, Jesus paid for man's forgiveness - but once that debt was paid, it was up to His disciples to dispense His forgiveness. *But when - and to whom?*

We say a person is saved when they "**repent and believe**" - *but what does that mean? What does that look like?* Jesus left that discernment up to the original disciples after He had breathed into them His Spirit.

In John 20:23 Jesus authorizes the twelve, "**If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.**" It was the disciples responsibility to give shape to our salvation.

*Do we just pray? What do we say?* The original twelve disciples sorted this out for the early Church.

Realize, nowhere in the Bible is any **man** given the authority to forgive sins. Not the priest in the confessional booth - or the pastor at the altar – not even the pope...  
*Forgiveness comes only from heaven!*

But in the process of witnessing to someone, Jesus gives us the responsibility of setting out the terms of salvation, and providing some closure for the request.

Based on the sinner's response, it's our job to let them know where they stand with God. I can provide assurance, or I can prevent a false sense of security.

I've prayed with people, and sensed their sincerity.

I've lead them to the Lord, and prayed afterwards, "Lord, I thank you that my friend is now forgiven. His sins are washed away. He now has a home in heaven."

With those words come a sigh of relief. The person is assured God's terms have been met for their salvation.

Whereas, on the flip-side, I've looked a hypocritical person in the face and told him God isn't going to forgive Him unless He repents and is willing to change.

And this relates to mothers. I believe this is the most important task a mom performs in the life of her child.

When a little tike knows he or she has done wrong, and they're sorry for their sin... Mom, don't miss the opportunity to kneel beside your child, and lead them in a prayer for God's forgiveness. *This is a sacred time...*

Then sweep them up in your arms and celebrate their new start. Rejoice that all is forgotten. Assure them they've been cleansed. Let them know that they're still loved and valued... by both God, and mom.

Let me ask you, *how can a child believe God has forgiven him or her of their sins, if the child's own mom has her doubts, and doesn't express her acceptance?*

Earlier I read Isaiah 49:15, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you." But the next verse is provocative. Isaiah writes, "See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands."

Sometimes we'll write a phone number we don't want to forget on our palm - or a name, to help us remember... Well, God loves you so much He writes your name inside His hands so He'll never forget you.

And it's interesting, here in John 20:20 we're told, "Jesus showed them His hands..." He showed them the scars in His hands - they were proof of His love!

But I wonder if that was all that they saw! Isaiah says God has inscribed "you on the palms of His hands."

To assure them they were forgiven, could it be that they saw their names written right next to those scars?

I'm certain of this... the disciples left the upper room that day knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt their sins were forgiven - that they were accepted by God.

Jesus assured His disciples of their forgiveness, and now He gives them the responsibility of doing the same for the millions of people who will also believe.

Mom, when your kids sin, it's your job to help them find forgiveness. *A mom tucks her kids in at night - she helps them with their homework - she prepares their meals - she kisses a boo-boo when they skin a knee...*

But nothing a mom does for her child is more vital than to help her know a right relationship with God.

And this continues when your child grows older.

Mom, you need to be honest with your child!

If the kid, or teenager, or young adult is being rebellious and defiant - don't let your child off the hook.

Exercise some *tough love*. If you don't see genuine repentance - if they haven't accepted any responsibility for their sin - if your child has no desire or willingness to change - then their guilt needs to be "retained."

Don't be a mamby-pamby mom - a pushover.

Don't let your kid get away with bloody-murder, and then defend him when he's obviously guilty. That's not loving your child. That's doing him or her a disservice.

Love forgives, but it also makes the child pay for the window they carelessly broke... Real love forgives, but only after the child goes next door and apologizes...

*Real love retains a person's sins on earth, until he's done what was asked by God in heaven...* Real love makes a child stand up and accept responsibility.

I'll never forget the day Becky came to our back door, and told my mom Sandy had hit her with his fist.

*She didn't say she deserved it!*



But it didn't matter to mom. There was no excuse! **“You don't hit girls.”** Mom made me stand there, with my arms behind my back, while Becky slapped me as hard as she could right across the jaw... *It still stings!*

But I'll tell you, I've never hit a girl since.

I know a mother's love is unconditional. She never gives up on her kids. I can *disappoint my mom, shame my mom, break my mom's heart* – but I'm certain I'll never be able to stop my mom from loving me...

But I've got a godly mom, and I'm just as certain that my mom's love will always acknowledge God's truth.

Though she'll love me no matter what I do - I know she'll never agree with me, or approve of my lifestyle if I choose to live in blatant sin, or embrace a heresy.

It reminds me of a story I read. Mel White was a talented author who helped several famous evangelical pastors adapt their sermons into book form.

When Mel came out of the closet, and announced that he was a homosexual, a reporter stuck a microphone in the face of Mel's mom. He asked her, **“Mam, do you consider your son an abomination?”**

Mrs. White replied as only a mom can, **“Well, he may be an abomination, but he's still my pride and joy.”** She didn't deny *his sin* - but neither did she deny *her son*.

And isn't that the Holy Spirit's attitude toward us, when we as God's kids - sin, and shame our Father.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin - *He doesn't let us off the hook* - but neither does He deny us as His kids. Romans 8:16 tells us, “**the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...**”

It's the Holy Spirit's longing to deliver us to God like a mother hen gathers her stray chicks under her wings.

At times it's tough to be a mom. Most moms are more at ease with *comfort*, than with *confrontation*.

But a Christian mom stands for both the grace and truth of God. *And that's why she needs the Holy Spirit.*

It is the Spirit of God that gives a mom the strength of God, and wisdom of God, and courage of God - as well as, the love of God, and the mercy of God - and everything she needs to represent Jesus to her child.

Let me close with a short essay by a man named “*Fred Kruse.*” He has entitled it, “*What is a mother?*”

“Somewhere between the youthful energy of a teenager and the golden years of a woman's life, there lives a marvelous, loving person known as “*Mother.*”

A mother is a curious mixture of patience, kindness, understanding, discipline, industriousness, purity, love.

She can be at one and the same time, a “lovelorn counselor” to a heartsick daughter, and a “head football coach” to an athletic son.

A mother can sew the tiniest stitch in the material for that dainty prom dress and is equally experienced in threading through the heaviest traffic in a mini-van.

A mother is the only creature on earth who can cry when she's happy, laugh when she's heartbroken, and work when she's feeling ill.

A mother is a picture of helplessness when Dad is near, and a marvel of resourcefulness when he's not.

A mother has the angelic voice suitable for the celestial choir, as she sings the Brahms' lullaby to a baby held tightly in her arms - yet this same voice can dwarf the sound of an amplifier when she calls her boys in from the yard for supper.

A mother has the fascinating ability to be almost everywhere at once and can somehow squeeze an enormous amount of living into an average day.

A mother is "*old-fashioned*" to her teenager; just "*mom*" to her 3<sup>rd</sup> grader; and "*mama*" to little sister...

Kruse ends his thoughts, But there is no greater thrill in life, than to point to that wonderful woman and be able to say to all the world, "*That's my mom!*"

A good mom *mothers* her kids. She doesn't *smother* her kids - and that takes courage, and wisdom, and sensitivity. **That's why a mom needs the Holy Spirit!**

Mom, today, I want you to open your heart to the Holy Spirit. I'd like to pray for our Lord Jesus to breathe on you, and impart to you a fresh filling of the Spirit.

You're needy... and He's willing... So let's pray...