

# The Gift of GRACE

## A Special Mother's Day Engage God Daily

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Mothers. By birth, marriage or adoption, we moms step into the role with visions and dreams for our children. With Mother's Day approaching this Sunday, this week's Engage God Daily offers ways to honor the mothers and influential mother-figures in our lives. For the next five days, we'll look at different passages that will help prepare our hearts to honor moms so that we can offer the gift of grace. As an acronym, GRACE will also represent five virtues—Gratitude, Respect, Acceptance, Compassion and Encouragement. Moms need each virtue in generous amounts as we help shape eternal beings whom God entrusted to our care.

A couple years ago at a family dinner, my oldest asked me, "So when you had me, did you know what you were doing?" The truth is, just like all moms, I knew who I wanted to be as a mother but learned everything I knew through on-the-job training. There was no specific "owner's manual" to learn how to "operate" each one-of-a-kind child. Sure, I'd read books on parenting but that's like reading books on how to play tennis then actually getting out on the court with a tennis racket expecting to play. No pressure, but unlike a game of tennis, my role as a mom helps mold eternal human beings...

Along with expectations we have for ourselves, the culture around us is overflowing with blog-advice and podcast-suggestions on how to be a "better mother." Taking in and sorting through advice from both the Christian subculture and society can feel like trying to sip water from a firehose. The number of competing voices on motherhood can be overwhelming! With so much at stake, mothers need to be encouraged and extended grace.

This week, we'll consider how we can show grace to the "mothers" in our lives, so think about the women who mean a lot to you — whether it's your mom, stepmom, grandmother, aunt, family friend, or mentor — and let the Spirit guide you in reaching out to them.

### **Offer G.R.A.C.E.**

GRACE is a wonderful word to shape our thinking about Mother's Day. It describes what we want to offer moms.

A current day dictionary understanding of the word grace means “a disposition to or an act or instance of kindness, courtesy, or clemency.”<sup>1</sup> In Scripture, the word *grace* has a similar but expanded meaning. Early in my Christian life I was taught that the word grace in Scripture meant “unmerited favor.” As years went by I learned that the word grace, or *charis* in Greek, means so much more. While God is the source of and foundation for grace and the Giver of unmerited favor, *charis* also means “to show kindness to someone, with the implication of graciousness on the part of the one showing such kindness.”<sup>2</sup> Often in Scripture it refers to “that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness. [There is a sense of] goodwill, lovingkindness and favor.”<sup>3</sup> As we grow in the likeness of Christ, we grow in our ability to extend grace to one another, something we are instructed to do as image-bearers of God.

So, even though we’re going to use G.R.A.C.E as an acronym, the concept guides our thinking this week.

## DAY ONE | Offer Gratitude

Our first grace-offering in this week’s Engage God Daily is *gratitude*.

In our text for today, Paul wrote to the church in Colossae in order to correct false teaching that had infiltrated the church concerning the full deity and full humanity of Jesus. Paul wanted believers to know that they were built up in Jesus Christ, not in philosophical arguments or paganistic ideas. In the paragraph before today’s passage (Colossians 2:1–5), Paul shared his goal for the Christians in Colossae: that they would know Christ, know his complete sufficiency and know truth so they may not be deceived by logical sounding arguments.

### Read

#### Colossians 2:6–7 (NIV)

*<sup>6</sup>So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

- As a result of Paul’s teaching about Christ, how should we respond? (vs 6)
- What should overflow in us because we are rooted and built up in him? (vs 7)

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<sup>1</sup> Inc Merriam-Webster, [Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary](#). (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003). Logos software

<sup>2</sup> 88.66 Louw-Nida, Logos software

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/charis.html>

## Reflect

As we are built up and strengthened in our faith, we become more thankful people and our lives overflow with gratitude, first to God and also to others.<sup>4</sup> Having an attitude of gratitude is a Spirit-enabled virtue that grows with practice. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being “little” and 10 being “with frequent regularity,” how is your sense of gratitude to God?

- How would you rate your attitude of gratitude to those closest to you in your life?

## Respond

Think of all the ordinary and mundane action items that can go into a mother’s day. We can become complacent and take those for granted! Socks don’t match and fold themselves and sibling rivalry can require strategic instruction on conflict resolution that requires time. After the squabble we moms may have honed our skills such that we could negotiate world peace, but we still can’t get to the dentist or school on time afterwards. Take a few moments to think about all that goes into the days of the mom whom you love. It’s easy to be thankful for the gratifying ways in which moms serve, but what are some of the daily ways that she serves others that often go unnoticed? Take a quiet moment to consider your answer, then record some thoughts here:

What ways can you show gratitude to the mom in your life this weekend? (Remember, that could be your aunt, grandmother, mentor, or the mother of your children — any “mom” in your life.)

## DAY TWO | Offer Respect

This week we are looking ahead to Mother's Day and gleaning from Scripture five ways that we can offer the kindness of *grace*. On Day One, we looked at the meaning of the word grace, then considered G.R.A.C.E. as an acronym for five virtues that are an expression of biblical grace: gratitude, respect, acceptance, compassion and encouragement. Yesterday we looked in the book of Colossians at "gratitude" and considered how we could cultivate an attitude of gratitude with God that spills over into how we treat others, specifically mothers. Today we'll consider 1 Peter 2: 13–17 and the topic of respect.

In the modern era, “respect” is defined as “high or special regard: esteem.”<sup>5</sup> It is possible in our day to respect someone without any actions. In the first century, to respect

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<sup>4</sup> Norman L. Geisler, “[Colossians](#),” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 676–677.

<sup>5</sup> Inc Merriam-Webster, [Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary](#). (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003). Logos software

someone required action on the part of the one showing respect. In our text for today, Peter had written to Christians who lived during a time of extreme persecution. Christians were being driven out of Rome, tortured, and killed for their faith. Peter wrote to encourage them to live dependent upon God and his Holy Spirit in order to obey Jesus in all areas, even in the midst of their trials and suffering. In this paragraph, Peter encouraged his audience, and us today, to have a distinctive life, even during painful trials. In a past study, we looked at this passage to see a Christian's responsibility concerning government. For our study today, we are zeroing in on a timeless truth: the virtue of respect in everyday life.

## Read

### 1 Peter 2:13–17 (NIV)

*<sup>13</sup> Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, <sup>14</sup> or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. <sup>15</sup> For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.*

*<sup>16</sup> Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. <sup>17</sup> Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.*

- What does Peter say in verse 17? In the last verse I read, who does Peter say we should show respect to?
- What does Peter say we should do concerning mothers who are fellow Christians?

## Reflect

To “show proper respect to everyone” refers to each person with whom we come in contact a focus on individuals rather than “everyone” as a group. We are to give others respect as individuals, because they’re fellow human beings also made in God’s image. This verse does not advocate a blanket statement that means to treat everyone with the equal amount of respect. Each person is to be given respect, but also the proper amount or type of respect due that person in that relationship.

- Think of the mothers we will honor on Sunday. What would it look like to show respect to her?
- What about other mothers in the body of Christ?

## Respond

One of the Ten Commandments related to the topic of respect is one many of us know: “Honor your father and mother.” In Matthew 15:1–6, Jesus confronts the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and experts in the law. They were known to follow the tradition of dedicating their possessions to God while their motives involved keeping their financial resources for themselves. One example of the hypocritical use of this tradition was for the religious leaders to claim their finances were “dedicated to God” to avoid obedience in regard to the fifth commandment to honor their parents who they were to care for

financially in their old age.<sup>6</sup> This was and is one way to honor parents. Caring for our parents with our resources in their older years is complicated! There is no one-size-fits-all formula for what honoring our parents looks like. If there were a formula, we would follow the formula and not depend upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit. How can you honor your mother, financially or otherwise, in this season of her life?

Some of the mothers we are planning on honoring Sunday (wives, sisters, daughters, mothers and mentors alike) may be the same age or even younger than us, but they all have one thing in common: they have lived two-plus-decades longer than their children. Regardless of education or IQ, moms will always be *decades* of life-experience-wiser than their children. That life experience can prove invaluable. Timeless truths out last the generations. When we implement truths born from our mothers and grandmothers, we show them respect as we honor their wisdom.

- What are some things you learned from your own mother or grandmother that she passed along to you from her life experience?
- How can you honor your mother, financially or otherwise, in this season of her life?

## DAY THREE | Offer Acceptance

Welcome to day three of this week's Engage God Daily. With Mother's Day quickly approaching, we are looking to God's Word to see how we can offer the moms in our lives the gift of grace. As a reminder, our dictionary understanding of the word grace means "a disposition to or an act or instance of kindness, courtesy, or clemency."<sup>7</sup> In Scripture, the word *grace* has a much broader meaning. Not only is it God's unmerited favor in our redemption, but most often the word is used to describe the *kindness* of God either through himself or through Christ-followers.

This week we're using G.R.A.C.E. as an acronym for five ways we can bless the different kinds of "moms" who have impacted us. On day one this week, we looked at offering gratitude, then looked at offering respect yesterday. Today, we will look to our passage to learn more about offering acceptance to the mothers whom we love.

In our passage today, Paul is writing to the Christ-followers in the city of Rome. Within the church there had been disagreement among believers about whether or not to celebrate certain days of the calendar or whether to eat certain foods. In Old Testament times, God had ordained some foods as "clean," and other foods were considered off-limits for the Hebrew people and therefore "unclean." Once Christ rose from the dead those food distinctions were no longer necessary. Some Jewish believers, needed time

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<sup>6</sup> Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "[Matthew](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 55.

<sup>7</sup> Inc Merriam-Webster, [Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary](#). (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

before they could eat all foods without guilt, while others who lived free in Christ did not understand the hesitation. Romans 15:1–7 addresses the in-fighting between the two groups. Listen to what Paul has to say to first century believers in Rome, and for the timeless truth that is relevant to us today:

## Read

### Romans 15:1–7 (NIV)

*We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. <sup>3</sup> For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” <sup>4</sup> For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. <sup>5</sup> May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, <sup>6</sup> so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*

- What is the answer to differences on nonessential issues? (vs 7) What is the outcome?
- How would our acceptance of each other glorify God to nonbelievers around us?

## Reflect

The word *accept* in Greek is *proslambano*, which in some forms means, “to welcome in.” In verse seven, the verb is “present imperative” meaning that one should *continue* accepting another person, in this case, fellow believers. The act of accepting fellow believers in this reference is not a one-time decision or a choice to merely tolerate a difference, but rather an ongoing action to “welcome in” to our lives and hearts without judgment.<sup>8</sup> Paul exhorts the Christians in Rome and us today to accept without judging one another concerning differences in how we live out our freedom in Christ. It’s more important for us to accept other Christians in “gray areas”—aspects of life that are not clearly defined in Scripture as either permitted or sinful—than to be “right” in our own minds.

## Respond

The older I get as a mother and a Christ-follower, the more “gray” I see parenting convictions that once seemed so black and white. For example, when we first moved to McKinney I was pregnant with our fourth and had three little ones four and under. Newly built homes filled our cul-de-sac and surrounding streets. Inside each were young families such as ours desiring to build lasting friendships. As eager as I was to make

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<sup>8</sup> John A. Witmer, “[Romans](#),” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 495.

friends for our kids and with other moms, I confess I worried more about what type of technology my kids might be exposed to, or how much junk food they might eat while away from home. While those concerns were legitimate and wise to consider, they became a main concern for me and dulled my awareness that God had orchestrated a perfect opportunity for to me to move toward my new neighbors with the love of Jesus. My reflexive concern that my kids might watch a show outside of my “approved” list seemed so important at the time. As it turned out, my neighbors had concerns of their own about having playdates at my house. I found that as we built relationships, we learned to navigate our different styles of parenting without judging each other for parenting differently.

Good parents will disagree on lots of issues from whether to make or buy baby food, to how to school our kids, to whether we let our teenagers date. Parenting decisions are tough decisions! So, mothers need to know that we are accepted, however we choose to parent in the “gray.” And even if our kids wear shorts and sandals to Jr. High in January (not that I’d know anything about that), we need to know that we are welcomed in to the lives of those around us, both at home and in the church. We can be so hard on ourselves in this culture of critique, and at times we can be hard on each other.

What are some “gray” parenting issues we can see friction over in the church? Name as many as you can:

- Have you been part of the problem or part of the solution in the life of the mother you will honor Sunday? In what way?
- How can you show acceptance to your mother in honor of Mother’s Day?

## DAY FOUR | Offer Compassion

Welcome to Day Four of the Engage God Daily, “The Gift of Grace.” Each day this week we’ve been looking at five gifts of GRACE we can offer the mothers in our lives as we celebrate them this weekend for Mother’s Day. So far, we’ve looked at the gifts of Gratitude, Respect, and Acceptance. Today the fourth gift of grace we can offer is Compassion.

Today, we’ll revisit the book of Colossians. Paul wrote this letter to correct false teaching about Christ and Christian living that had infiltrated the church. In Col. 3:5–11, Paul exhorts his audience to take off the old self (our dead-to-sin, old-nature self) and gives instruction on how Christ-followers should live: put on the new-self in Christ. He continues this teaching in today’s text.<sup>9</sup>

### Read

#### Colossians 3:12–14 (NIV)

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<sup>9</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [\*The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon\*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 275.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

- What type of people does Paul say we are?
- After we “take off” the old-self and its sinful behavior, what are we to do?

## Reflect

We are holy and dearly loved by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to “clothe” ourselves with the virtues of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience and forgiveness, all of which are bound together by love. Through our obedience, we build bridges with fellow believers and unbelievers alike. There are many Christlike virtues we’re to put on and live out in relationships, but let’s look closely at *compassion*.

According to the dictionary, compassion is a “sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress together with a desire to alleviate it.”<sup>10</sup> In the first century, compassion was associated with “the inward parts of the body,” or bowels, where the seat of emotion was believed to exist.<sup>11</sup> In our text for today, it means “tender sympathy of heartfelt compassion”<sup>12</sup> Compassion is a virtue that we mothers dispense in generous amounts on a regular, if not daily, basis. Today we’ll consider compassion as it relates to our own mothers, mother-in-laws, or other caretakers.

In our home, I’m the push-over, easily swayed by tears and smashed dreams. The kids, and even the dogs, have always known this about me and would visit me first if they needed anything in the middle of the night. So when our first mammal-pet (Cuddles, the gerbil) died, all four stampeded down the stairs nearly running over my husband on their way to find me. It was as if he were a patch of fog on a dip in the road. He showed up in the doorway of our bedroom with a puzzled look on his face as the four wailing children piled on top of me where I sat. In that situation, only mom’s compassion helped with the loss.

- Think back to one or more instances when your mother was there for you and showed you compassion. What instance stands out in your memory?

## Respond

It’s easy to think of moms *giving* compassion, but how often do we think to give compassion to the moms in our lives? It can be easy to forget that, like all human beings,

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<sup>10</sup> Inc Merriam-Webster, [Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary](#). (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

<sup>11</sup> William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 938.

<sup>12</sup> Norman L. Geisler, [“Colossians.”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 682.

we moms are finite beings with limited resources. Some of us moms can feel pressure, either self-imposed or expected by others, to be always available to everyone in the family and still have a productive day. For some of us, there lurks a “phantom-mom” who *can* be everything to everyone, and she haunts our mom-hearts and distorts God’s expectations of us moms. The reality is we are limited beings who are forever learning on the job. This truth can crash in around us leaving some of us feeling inadequate, like a four year-old who rides a bike with training wheels but is disappointed in herself that she’s not zipping around on a 10-speed bike.

Culture says we can have it all and be it all, but that’s a lie counter to God’s truth! Only God can be available all the time. We moms cannot. At the end of the day, most of us mothers are doing the best we can in spite of our own brokenness and weaknesses. Not only do moms need grace, sometimes moms need compassion too.

- When was the last time you “stood in the shoes” of your mother or mother-in-law? What were the circumstances?
- How did extending compassion impact your perception of and relationship with her?

## DAY FIVE | Offer Encouragement

Welcome to the fifth and final day of “The Gift of Grace” in honor of Mother’s Day! Grace is often thought of as the “unmerited favor” of God in salvation, but as we saw in Day One this week, grace means so much more. In Scripture, grace is also used to show kindness to someone.<sup>13</sup> It often it refers to “that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness. [There is a sense of] goodwill, lovingkindness and favor.”<sup>14</sup>

This more substantial understanding of grace refers to the spaciousness of God’s kindness both extended to us and that which we can extend others, and this week our application is focused upon mothers. The first four days this week, we’ve used G.R.A.C.E as an acronym and looked in Scripture for instruction on how to offer grace through Gratitude, Respect, Acceptance and Compassion. Today we’ll look at 1 Thessalonians and consider the gift of Encouragement.

The Apostle Paul wrote today’s text to new Christ-followers in a young church in the city of Thessalonica. His letter encouraged them in their new faith, defended his ministry as an apostle, exhorted them to live godly lives and gave them assurance concerning what happened to Christians who died before the return of Christ. Paul exhorted the Thessalonians and us today not to live as those who are “asleep,” (verse 6) in a state of “spiritual lethargy and insensitivity,”<sup>15</sup> but as those who are alert and living godly lives awaiting Christ’s returns.

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<sup>13</sup> Louw-Nida 88.66, Logos software

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/charis.html>

<sup>15</sup> Thomas L. Constable, “[1 Thessalonians](#),” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 706.

# Read

## 1 Thessalonians 5:4–11 (NIV)

*4 But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 5 You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. 9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

Paul uses the words translated as “light” and “day” to refer to God’s people and his truth and “dark” or “night” to refer to the unsaved world in the midst of dark forces. Because we are “children of the light” (vs 5), “awake and sober (behaving with self-control or moderation)” (vs 6), how should we respond to the world around us? (vs 8)

Because the return of the Lord Jesus is approaching and will arrive suddenly, what are we to do? (vs 11)

# Reflect

1 Thessalonians 5:11 is a well-known verse describing how we are to treat one another in the body of Christ. We are to “*encourage one another and build each other up.*” A modern definition of the word encourage is to “inspire with courage, spirit, or hope.”<sup>16</sup> The definition in the text today means “to cause someone to be encouraged or consoled by verbal or nonverbal means.”<sup>17</sup>

While it would be easy to just look at the inspiring exhortation in verse 11, it’s always important to consider a verse in its context. Even though Paul wrote this letter nearly 2000 years ago, we are still in the end times just as the Thessalonians were. We all need encouragement especially in times of trial to continue to be faithful to Jesus. Our faithfulness should come, not just in big circumstances, decisions or events. We need encouragement on a regular basis to love God and others moment-by-moment, in all areas of our lives.

Moms, along with Dads, are raising their children in times that can be full of darkness and temptation. They need this encouragement as they prepare the next generation to faithfully follow Jesus as “children of the light.” Part of being “awake and sober” is being aware that Jesus could return at any moment and living like it. But part of being awake

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<sup>16</sup> Inc Merriam-Webster, [Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary](#). (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

<sup>17</sup> Louw-Nida 25.150, Logos software

is knowing that his return may still be a long ways off, and preparing our children to be lights in a dark world. It's a tough job, and all parents need encouragement.

- Think of a time when you felt discouraged and weary and someone encouraged you. How did that person encourage you?

## Respond

With Mother's Day just two days away, we can apply this timeless truth to encourage each other to follow Jesus by encouraging the mothers and mother-figures in our lives. More than ever, moms need our encouragement! Moms can grow weary in the hard and sometimes thankless everyday duties that go with mothering.

Encouragement can come from all kinds of places. I once found a note from a stranger that was slipped into my diaper bag. I had been at a day-long swim meet for one child with three squirmy little ones (all dressed in their favorite costume). We spent hours in the bleachers waiting for their sibling to swim for a grand total of five minutes. I did nothing extraordinary that day. As I recall, I was just glad that no one wet their pants trying to make it to the bathroom during one of our many trips.

Back at home later that evening, I breathed a sigh of relief as I unpacked the diaper bag. I found a note that read, "Buzz Lightyear and his friends did so well today. You did a great job, mom." I wept with gratitude at the kindness of that encouraging person. A few words on a piece of paper was all it took to refresh my soul and have more confidence for the next day.

- How can you encourage a mom in your life?
- How can you also offer gratitude, respect, acceptance, and compassion?

Happy Mother's Day!