# “Divide Fifty-Fifty? Not For Mothers!”

## *1st Kings 3:16-27*

Let’s turn to today’s Scripture reading, the Old Testament history book of 1st Kings 3:16-27.

Today is Mother’s Day, the day we set aside to recognize and honor mothers everywhere. And many of you mothers no doubt remember the author and humorist Erma Bombeck. ***She once wrote: ‘For the first four or five years after I had children, I considered motherhood a temporary condition--not a calling. It was a time of my life set aside for exhaustion and long hours. It would pass. Then one afternoon, with three kids in tow, I came out of a supermarket pushing a cart (with four wheels that went in opposite directions) when my toddler son got away from me. Just outside the door, he ran toward a machine holding bubble gum in a glass dome. In a voice that shattered glass he shouted, “Gimme! Gimme!” I told him I would give him what for if he didn’t stop shouting and get in the car.***

***As I physically tried to pry his body from around the bubble gum machine, he pulled the entire thing over. Glass and balls of bubble gum went all over the parking lot. We had now attracted a sizable crowd. I told him he would never see a cartoon as long as he lived, and if he didn’t control his temper he was going to be making license plates for the state. He tried to stifle his sobs as he looked around at the staring crowd. Then he did something that I was to remember for the rest of my life. In his helpless quest for comfort, he turned to the only one he trusted his emotions with--me. He threw his arms around my knees and held on for dear life. I had humiliated him, chastised him, and berated him, but I was still all he had.***

***That single incident defined my role. I was a major force in this child’s life. Sometimes we forget how important stability is to a child. I’ve always told mine, “The easiest part of being a mother is giving birth…the hardest part is showing up for it each day.”***

So thank you, moms, not only for bringing us into this world***—and for not taking us out of it when we deserved it, amen!--***but thank you for showing up for it each day. We’re who we are because of you.

This morning’s Scripture reading is about mothers and wisdom, two things which go hand in hand. To give us a little background: before our Scripture reading David’s son, Solomon, had become king. One night…*the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream, and God said, “What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!”* (1st Kings 3:5). Solomon asked for wisdom and God granted his request. And it wasn’t long after that his newfound wisdom was put to the test.

*16Some time later two prostitutes came to the king to have an argument settled. 17“Please, my lord,” one of them began, “this woman and I live in the same house. I gave birth to a baby while she was with me in the house. 18Three days later this woman also had a baby. We were alone; there were only two of us in the house.*

*19“But her baby died during the night when she rolled over on it. 20Then she got up in the night and took my son from beside me while I was asleep. She laid her dead child in my arms and took mine to sleep beside her. 21And in the morning when I tried to nurse my son, he was dead! But when I looked more closely in the morning light, I saw that it wasn’t my son at all.”*

*22Then the other woman interrupted, “It certainly was your son, and the living child is mine.”*

*“No,” the first woman said, “the living child is mine, and the dead one is yours.” And so they argued back and forth before the king.*

*23Then the king said, “Let’s get the facts straight. Both of you claim the living child is yours, and each says that the dead one belongs to the other. 24All right, bring me a sword.” So a sword was brought to the king. 25Then he said, “Cut the living child in two, and give half to one woman and half to the other!”*

*26Then the woman who was the real mother of the living child, and who loved him very much, cried out, “Oh no, my lord! Give her the child—please do not kill him!” But the other woman said, “All right, he will be neither yours nor mine; divide him between us!”*

*27Then the king said, “Do not kill the child, but give him to the woman who wants him to live, for she is his mother!”*

So what do we see about mothers in this peculiar chain of events?

**First, mothers aren’t perfect.** Both of the mothers in this Scripture passage were prostitutes, and one of them was conniving and deceptive. ***It’s been said that the best Mother’s Day sermons aren’t the ones on the “perfect mother.” When you preach on the perfect mother, most moms leave feeling discouraged because they don’t feel they can be that perfect. But preach on Potiphar’s wife, Jezebel or Herodias and moms leave saying “Hey, I’m a pretty good mom after all!”***

Moms aren’t perfect. Nobody is. Nobody had the perfect mother and nobody is the perfect mother. Mother’s Day can be a difficult time. For some, it brings back memories of a wonderful mother who is dearly missed because she has died and is now in heaven. For others, it reminds them of the mother who may have been--or may still be--a difficult mom.

Mothers aren’t perfect. Maybe that will take some of the pressure off some of you mothers who don’t meet your own expectations of motherhood. You’re not expected to be perfect … you *will* make mistakes. In our Scripture reading, we see that one mother was cruel, selfish and heartless. “*…She got up in the night and took my son from beside me while I was asleep. She laid her dead child in my arms and took mine to sleep beside her.”* Mothers aren’t perfect.

**Second, we see from this passage that mothers know their children:** *…in the morning when I tried to nurse my son, he was dead! But when I looked more closely in the morning light, I saw that it wasn’t my son at all.”* She took one look at this newborn child and knew it wasn’t hers. ***Now, speaking for us guys, most newborn babies tend to look alike to us, amen! Line up three or four infants in front of us guys and we couldn’t tell you which one belonged to who.*** But not so for mothers! Mothers know their children, even at birth.

There’s no fooling a mother. They know when you’re lying, trying to hide something from them, or when you’re sick. They know when we’re afraid or worried or in trouble. It’s like moms have a sixth sense***—we all know they have eyes in the back of their heads, amen!*** This woman’s child was only a few days old but she knew her own. There’s a unique bond between mother and child.

**Third, mothers will sacrifice.** Being a mom is all about sacrifice. ***Someone once said “A mother is a person who, seeing there are only four pieces of pie for five people, promptly announces she never did care for pie.”***

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*26Then the woman who was the real mother of the living child, and who loved him very much, cried out, “Oh no, my lord! Give her the child—please do not kill him!”* This mother would rather give up her child than see it hurt. She’d rather surrender it to the other woman than have it divided between them. Divide fifty-fifty? Not for mothers! The real mother was willing to sacrifice her motherhood for the life of the baby.Solomon, in all his wisdom knew that and determined the true mother because of the mother’s sacrificial love.

A good mother sacrifices for her children. You buy them the best things that you can afford, even if it means going without things yourself. You take them to practices, school events, social events, even if it means taking up most of your time that you could be spending on yourself. You encourage them to participate in sports, dance, band and dozens other activities, even if it means more work for you.

**And fourth, mothers have problems.** That’s not news to a single mother here, amen! The good mother in this story had not only been left with a dead infant; she was at risk of losing her true child because of Solomon’s decision: *24”All right, bring me a sword.” So a sword was brought to the king. 25Then he said, “Cut the living child in two, and give half to one woman and half to the other!”* Remember there was no DNA testing back then so the good mother had problems proving she was the true mom.

If you thought you had problems before becoming a mother, you found out afterward that you had your children’s problems, too! And your husband’s problems as well. Being a mom is a high stress occupation. The stress may lighten from time to time, or it may change over time, but it never disappears. Good mothers always worry about their children. ***I’m 53 years old and my mom still worries about me.*** I have no doubt that you mothers here, regardless of your age or the age of your children, are exactly the same. Motherhood is a lifelong ministry of service and sacrifice. ***It’s been said that motherhood is a little like wrestling with a gorilla. You don’t quit when you’re tired. You quit when the gorilla is tired.”***

So moms, on this day that we honor and remember you for all that you’ve done—and all that you continue to do—*thank you*. Remember that you’re not perfect. And that’s okay. You know your children. You sacrifice. You have problems. But none of us would be who we are without your love, your guidance, your patience, your perseverance.

Thank you for bearing us and for bearing with us.

Thank you for not taking us out of the world when we deserved it.

Thank you for continuing to worry about us.

Thank you for setting us an example of what it means to love and serve Jesus Christ.

Thank you for showing up each day.

Enjoy your day. You deserve it! Amen.