

Things Mom Taught Me by Unknown

My Mother taught me about ANTICIPATION... "Just wait until your father gets home."

My Mother taught me to MEET A CHALLENGE... "What were you thinking? Answer me when I talk to you! Don't talk back to me!"

My Mother taught me LOGIC... "If you fall off that swing and break your neck, you're not going to the store with me."

My Mother taught me MEDICAL SCIENCE... "If you don't stop crossing your eyes, they are going to freeze that way."

My Mother taught me to THINK AHEAD... "If you don't pass your spelling test, you'll never get a good job."

My Mother taught me HUMOR... "When that lawn mower cuts off your legs, don't come running to me."

My Mother taught me how to BECOME AN ADULT... "If you don't eat your vegetables, you'll never grow up."

My Mother taught me about GENETICS... "You're just like your father."

My Mother taught me about WISDOM OF AGE... "When you get to be my age, you will understand."

My mother taught me to APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE... "If you're going to kill each other, do it outside. I just got finished cleaning."

My mother taught me about RELIGION... "You better pray that will come out of the carpet."

My mother taught me about ENVY... "There are millions of children in this world who don't have wonderful parents like you do."

My mother taught me about FORESIGHT... "Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."

My mother taught me about IRONY... "Keep crying, and I'll give you something to cry about."

And last but not least...

My Mother taught me about JUSTICE... "One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you....Then you'll see what it's like!"

Mothers give good advice too...A daughter broke-up with her boyfriend. She asked her Mother's advice about returning the gifts he'd given her. Without a pause, her Mother replied, "Send back the stuffed animals and letters, but keep the jewelry for sentimental reasons."

On SingleMom.com I found an [article](#) where a woman writes about her friend Kelly. Kelly is a single mom who is in a financial dilemma.

Kelly is a friend I've gotten to know from work over the past three years or so. She's the cheery voiced receptionist who all our customers appreciate so much that they often comment they wish they had someone like Kelly answering their phones.

But there's a lot more to Kelly than a friendly voice and a smiling face. You see Kelly's a single mom with two teenage kids ages 15, and 16, and she holds down two jobs in order to pay the bills. After her five day work week at our company, she spends the weekend monitoring phones for a local suburban police station, and as she told me recently, "The weekend doesn't mean much to me because I'm still working. It all tastes the same to me."

She did confess that she gets one weekend off per month for which she's eternally grateful. But she's bringing in no money on those two days, for which she also feels a bit guilty. Kelly is probably in her late 30's and has trained herself to keep a stiff lower lip, and to avoid feeling sorry for herself, knowing full well that self pity gains you nothing in this old world. But with two growing kids, two incomes are necessary to make ends meet, and she provides them both, leaving her little time to do what she would most like to do, be a full time MOM.

A few more things need to be said in order to complete this picture. Kelly has no college degree, but she's absolutely no dummy. In fact, she has skills that could take her higher in the business world if she only had the confidence to take advantage of them. For example, she's a good writer and a great proof reader. I know because she proofs my stuff all the time. And my stuff is always better after Kelly's done cleaning it up.

But to date, her natural humility (lack of self confidence) has prevented Kelly from saying to the publishing department, "I'd like to write an article on this or that subject," with an eye toward developing a free lance writing career to replace (at least) the weekend job. As a result, she continues to work two jobs, and she does her level best to make the best of it.

I must admit that I not only like Kelly, but I admire the grit and determination she shows, despite the odds of her current circumstance. Quite honestly I don't know how she (or any of the millions of other single Moms around this nation) maintains her optimistic outlook from day to day. If I were in a similar position I don't know if I could keep up with her...in fact I doubt very much that I could.

Needless to say, our message today concerns a mom...*a single mom*. We are going to look in on the life and circumstances of a single mom who was worse off than Kelly. My job offers me the privilege to speak with single moms each week—many of whom do not know where they will be living the next week.

Raising a family today has become increasingly difficult, resulting in more and more children growing up in single parent households. In fact, according to the US Census Bureau of Household and Family [Statistics](#) (2006), 28 percent of families with children under 18 are being raised by single parents. Often, those single families are headed by mom, a staggering 23 percent. Also reported, the number of single mothers has increased to over 17 million, almost six times that of the 3 million in 1970.

Sadly, [single moms](#) are left to wear many different hats, fulfill many responsibilities and encounter many

different obstacles. Single moms, find themselves, alone, afraid, ashamed, overworked, sleep deprived, discouraged and often under appreciated and stereotyped.¹

According to the latest statistics, over 70% of all black children are born out of wedlock and about 80% will spend most of their childhood without a father figure in the house. This means that most of the child-raising in the African-American community will continue for the foreseeable future to fall on the shoulders of the single black woman.

So it's important that we speak to the single mom in this message today. In our text we find a single mom—a widow...

1 Kings 17:8-9 Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."

Zarephath was a city located between Tyre and Sidon. The city was inhabited by Gentiles. Jews normally did not tread into Gentile territory—that is like a Jewish today, person walking down Park Heights Avenue from upper Pikesville to Park Circle. Some of you may remember the reaction of Jesus' disciples when He told them that He *had* to go *through* Samaria. "Say what?" (John 4)

So Elijah, the prophet, was commanded by God to go to Zarephath, a city inhabited by "ceremonially unclean," "pagan," non-Jews.

1 Kings 17:10-11 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink." And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."

Elijah lived during the period of Ahab's reign. Ahab was a wicked Jewish king that allowed worship of the pagan God of Baal (*bah'-al*) to be formally introduced into Israel (16:32). What Ahab did would be like the president of Israel issuing a directive for Islamic mosques to be built throughout the nation of Israel and then funding the construction.

Not only was Ahab a wicked king but he had no backbone when it came to his home and kingdom. His wife Jezebel was the one really in charge. The establishment of Baal worship in Israel was her idea. Anyone in Israel who didn't worship this false god was mistreated, some to the point of death—this persecution threatened the survival of the people who worshipped the true God.

The Prophet Elijah's first task was to announce to Ahab that the true God was about to send a dreaded famine upon the country because of Ahab's idolatry. Baal was the Canaanite god of the storm. To Ahab and the other idolaters, Baal was god of the weather and fertility; so sending a drought and famine was God's way of directly challenging the false religion instituted by Ahab and Jezebel.

God had promised to His people through Elijah that it wouldn't rain for three years and it stopped raining.

The famine in Israel was so severe it had spread to Zarephath. Elijah, a Jew and a complete stranger, approached this non-Jew widow while she was collecting sticks to make a fire for her last meal.

¹ <http://www.refuge-for-a-single-mom.com/blog>

The amazing thing about this was that Elijah, during the time of drought and famine, had the nerve to ask this widow for some water and some bread.

1 Ki 17:12 So she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

If this widow was living in our day it would be like her saying to Elijah, *"My turn-off notice is for today at noon. All I have is some change and I'm on my way to Stop, Shop and Save to get a small bag of flour and a stick of margarine. Then I'm going home to bake a pan of bread before my gas is turned off. Me and my kid are going to eat this bread and then die."*

Elijah approaches this poor widow who only has enough flour and oil to make some flat bread for herself and her son and he has the nerve to ask her to feed him first!

Notice that she was gathering the sticks and her son was more than likely not with her. She may not have wanted him to know how bad off they were. She may not have wanted her son to worry.

Today, there are many parents like this mom. You shield your children from these kinds of things because you don't want them to worry.

You don't want them to worry about the turn-off notice.

You don't want them to worry about the eviction notice.

You don't want them to worry about who they are growing up faster than you can afford to buy them clothes.

Some mother's make the mistake of "just saying 'No!'" *"Mom can I have...? NO! "Mom can I go...? NO!"*

Tell them that money is scarce but don't go to the extreme and break their spirit: *"Mom can I have...?" "You should know that we broke!" or "Your no good father didn't send the child support this month!"*

I want to encourage you that it is ok to let your children know that money is scarce. It's ok to let them know that you have only so much to get through the month. But you don't leave them in an emotional pit so that they will worry.

- You tell them about God's promises! You assure them that God will provide because He said He would in His Word.
- You tell them that God said that He would not withhold no good thing from those who walk upright before Him.
- You tell them that if you and the kids seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, God will supply your family the things that you need.
- You tell them that you can cast all your cares and anxieties upon the Lord and He has promised to care for you.

The widow at Zarephath was gathering sticks to bake some bread so she and her son could share what she thought would be their last meal.

Believe it or not, as affluent a nation as the United States, we still have people in our country that have trouble finding food. We have people whose cupboards are nearly empty. We still have people who live from week to week and month to month when it comes to their meals.

Yes, we have those who get food stamps each month but some people take that money and spend it at the beginning of the month and run out of the food before the month is over. Some of them use their allotment on other things and when it is time to eat there is nothing for their kids.

The widow at Zarephath was asked to give her last meal to a complete stranger. Have you ever taken your last meal and given it to another? Most of us haven't.

I am reminded of a movie that my daughters loved to watch: *The Little Princess*. The Little Princess, in which Sara Crewe is left at Miss Minchin's boarding school by her wealthy father but when the school head is told her father dies in the war and will not get the tuition she begins treating Sarah like a slave.

In the movie the now impoverished Sarah is sent out to the market and she finds a coin in the gutter. Her mouth waters as she heads toward the bakery to buy a pastry. As she sits down and is about to take a bite she notices a little girl who is obviously living on the street and whose eyes have spotted her pastry. Sarah unselfishly and sacrificially gives her pastry to the hungry little girl.

If you've never given out of your poverty, you may have missed out on a blessing. In the New Testament we find the account where Jesus celebrated a widow who gave out of her poverty:

Luke 21:1-4 (The Message) - *Just then He (Jesus) looked up and saw the rich people dropping offerings in the collection plate. Then he saw a poor widow put in two pennies. He said, "The plain truth is that this widow has given by far the largest offering today. All these others made offerings that they'll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn't afford—she gave her all!"*

Jesus says "...this poor widow has put in more than all—she has given by far the largest offering today." He says many gave out of their abundance but she gave extravagantly what she couldn't afford—she gave her all!"

What is the difference between giving out of your abundance and giving out of your poverty?

Giving out of your poverty is giving what you can't afford to give.

Giving out of your poverty is giving outside of your comfort zone and outside of your security zone.

Giving out of your poverty is the kind of giving that forces you to trust God to make ends meet.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 8, the Apostle Paul commends the Macedonian churches for giving out of their poverty despite the fact that they were "dirt poor:"

Now, friends, I want to report on the surprising and generous ways in which God is working in the churches in Macedonia province. Fierce troubles came down on the people of those churches, pushing them to the very limit. The trial exposed their true colors: They were incredibly happy, though desperately poor. The pressure triggered something totally unexpected: an outpouring of pure and generous gifts. I was there and saw it for myself. They gave offerings of whatever they could—far more than they could afford!—pleading for the privilege of helping

out in the relief of poor Christians. This was totally spontaneous, entirely their own idea, and caught us completely off guard. What explains it was that they had first given themselves unreservedly to God and to us. The other giving simply flowed out of the purposes of God working in their lives. (2 Corinthians 8:1-5, The Message)

Elijah asks this widow to do the unthinkable for someone in her situation...

1 Kings 17:13 And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son."

The widow tells the prophet that she's taking her last flour and oil to make her last meal. Elijah says to the widow, "...do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first."

The request of Elijah reminds me of the Old Testament teaching on "first fruits." "First fruits refers to the first portion of the harvest that is given to God. When the Bible speaks of first fruits, it is referring to:

- The first to come in time
- A pledge or hope of the greater harvest to follow
- Something specifically dedicated to God.

By giving God the first fruits, Israel acknowledged that all good things come from God and that everything belongs to God.

Giving the first fruits was also a way of expressing faith that God would provide; just as He provided the first fruits, so He would provide the rest of the crops that were needed for the balance of the season.

The first crop of the harvest was given to God. You were not guaranteed that the fields would produce for the rest of the season—bad weather could destroy them—locust could obliterate them.

You also need to know that the Feast of First Fruits was instituted when the nation of Israel was still wandering in the wilderness, *without land or crops*. This offering was given in *faith*. The faith that God would lead the people to the land He had promised.

Elijah was letting this woman in on the secret of not having to worry about where your next meal is coming from. Do you want to know this secret? The secret is: "*Put God first.*"

Elijah tells the widow, "*Do not fear!*" He says, "*Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me...*"

Imagine being in this woman's shoes. You barely have enough to pay the rent. You barely have enough money to pay the gas and electric bill and to get some groceries into your home. If you give a percentage of your fixed income right off the top, somebody ain't getting paid.

But this widow's condition was even worse. Her husband had died and it was just she and her son. In Bible times, widows were not able to take care of themselves. When the husband died, they were deprived of financial support. They were even not allowed to inherit their husband's estate.

BGE had turned off her utilities. She had to go find a few sticks to build a fire and bake her last meal. She didn't even have any salt, eggs, yeast or baking soda. She had a little flour and a little oil so the last meal for this widow and her son would be some dry matzos and the prophet Elijah wanted to take that.

She had a choice: Give Elijah their last meal and die sooner or eat the bread themselves and die later.

Another thing she had to consider was this: *Was this just a foreigner scamming her out of her last meal? Or was he truly a prophet of God?*

This reminds me of the scores of emails our church receives, purportedly originating from Nigeria, Sierra Leone or the Ivory Coast, saying the writing of the letter is the attorney of a wealthy man who has recently turned from his sins and given his life to Jesus Christ. Sorry for his life of sin, he now wants to donate several millions of his wealthy estate to a church to aid in the advancement of the Gospel.²

All we need to do is transact some “good faith” money to show them we are a legitimate religious organization. Afterwards, they will wire “millions” of dollars into our bank account. Have you ever received one of these emails?

The man of God tells this woman to bake him a cake with her last flour and oil. Is it a scam?

She could have told Elijah, *“My son and I will eat the matzo and if there is any left, we will give you some.”*

This is what many do. Some of you will put all your money toward your bills thinking that if there is anything left you will give it to the Lord, *“after all, God doesn’t want me out on the street; He doesn’t want me out in the cold of winter or in the dark.”*

Let me tell you something that I learned the hard way: When you take measures to meet your own needs first, there will never be anything left for the Lord—something always comes up!

Something always breaks! Somebody always gets sick. Someone always has a need. Children will always need clothes. Appliances will always break.

Notice God’s promise to the widow:

1 Ki 17:14 "For thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth.'"

When you give to the Lord first, He will always make a way for you. Check out this promise:

Matthew 6:31-33 - "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

Notice that God’s provision for flour and oil for the widow wasn’t an opened ended promise—it was *only* to continue on until the day that God sent rain on the earth.

The fulfillment of this promise was based on the widow’s obedience to Elijah’s command—it was a promise for a set period of time. For God to perpetually supply flour and oil would mean for Him to destroy this woman’s faith.

² <http://www.snopes.com/crime/fraud/nigeria.asp>

Heb 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

God's promise to the widow at Zarephath was a promise made to her. It was not routine.

We often times pray the Lord's prayer:

Mat 6:9 ... Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

Mat 6:10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

Mat 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

God's promise to the widow at Zarephath was a promise made to her. It was not routine.

The routine promise to God's children is that He would give us our "daily bread" and this promise is contingent on us adoring God (*Our Father who art in heaven, holy is your Name.*) It is also contingent on our being subject to His will (*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*) Only after we adore Him and are subject to Him is He obligated as a loving Father to "give us our daily bread."

You have some out there who teach that Christians are supposed to have an unending supply of wealth and an unending supply of good health. If we were supposed to have an unending supply of good health, how are we supposed to get to heaven?

1 Ki 17:15 So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days.

The widow at Zarephath gave out of her poverty. The key here is "giving." Give to the Lord! If you and I keep on giving, we will keep on receiving.

Luke 6:38 "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

1 Ki 17:16 The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Elijah.

Mat 10:41 "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward."

The widow at Zarephath obeyed the Word of the Lord, ministered to the prophet and was blessed—both she and her son.

Now don't walk away thinking that this is another of those messages trying to bring more money into the church. It has nothing to do with giving money to God or His church. It has everything to do with both Elijah and the widow learning to trust God.

Elijah has to trust God and obey Him by going to a Gentile widow that God had prepared to meet his needs (vs. 9). The widow would learn to trust and obey God as she gave out of her poverty.

If you read on you will find that God tested both the widow and Elijah further. Her son died but God used Elijah to raise him back to life. In 1 Kings 17:24, after Elijah had revived her son, the woman said to him, *"Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is the truth."*

When the single mom is in trouble she is oftentimes given money or pointed to Social Services and government crisis intervention agencies. But here the Bible leaves both she and ourselves with a principal to consider and obey.

The principal God is teaching us is *giving but giving in faith*. It is giving out of your poverty. Trusting the Lord for His provision by putting Him first. Our tendency when we have little or nothing is to save what is in our possession for ourselves. But God wants us to trust Him and give. The song says, *"Little becomes much when you place it in the Master's hand."*

When Moses was sent by God back to Egypt to deliver the children of Israel from slavery. He complained to God that He didn't have what it would take to accomplish this great task.

Exo 4:1-2 - Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'" So the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?"

More times than not God will ask you *"What is that in your hand?"* It doesn't matter how poor you are, there is always something that you have in your possession that can be offered up to God for His use and for His glory.

It may not be a material thing but something like a talent or ability (Singing, Serving, Janitorial, Office worker, Evangelism team, Usher, Greeter, AromaHouse. Host LIFE Group home, KidzSpace).

God says to Moses, *"What is that in your hand?"* Moses says, *"A rod."*

Exo 4:-4 And He said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail" (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand),

Someone who knows how to handle snakes knows to pick it up by the neck so that the reptile will not bite him, but God tells Moses to take the serpent by its tail. Moses had to trust God!

Similarly, God tells the widow at Zarephath to give her last meal to the prophet. What is God asking from you?

"I only have enough gas to get to work" – Give it to the Lord!

"I barely have enough time for me and my kids" – Give it to the Lord!

"This is my bus fare" – Give it to the Lord!

"I can't make it to Sunday School, Sunday morning is the only time I have to sleep in" – Give it to the Lord!

It is all about trusting Him! This works not only for single moms but for everyone who has a need.

God is not only asking us to trust Him with our lives; but to trust Him with our eternal destiny.