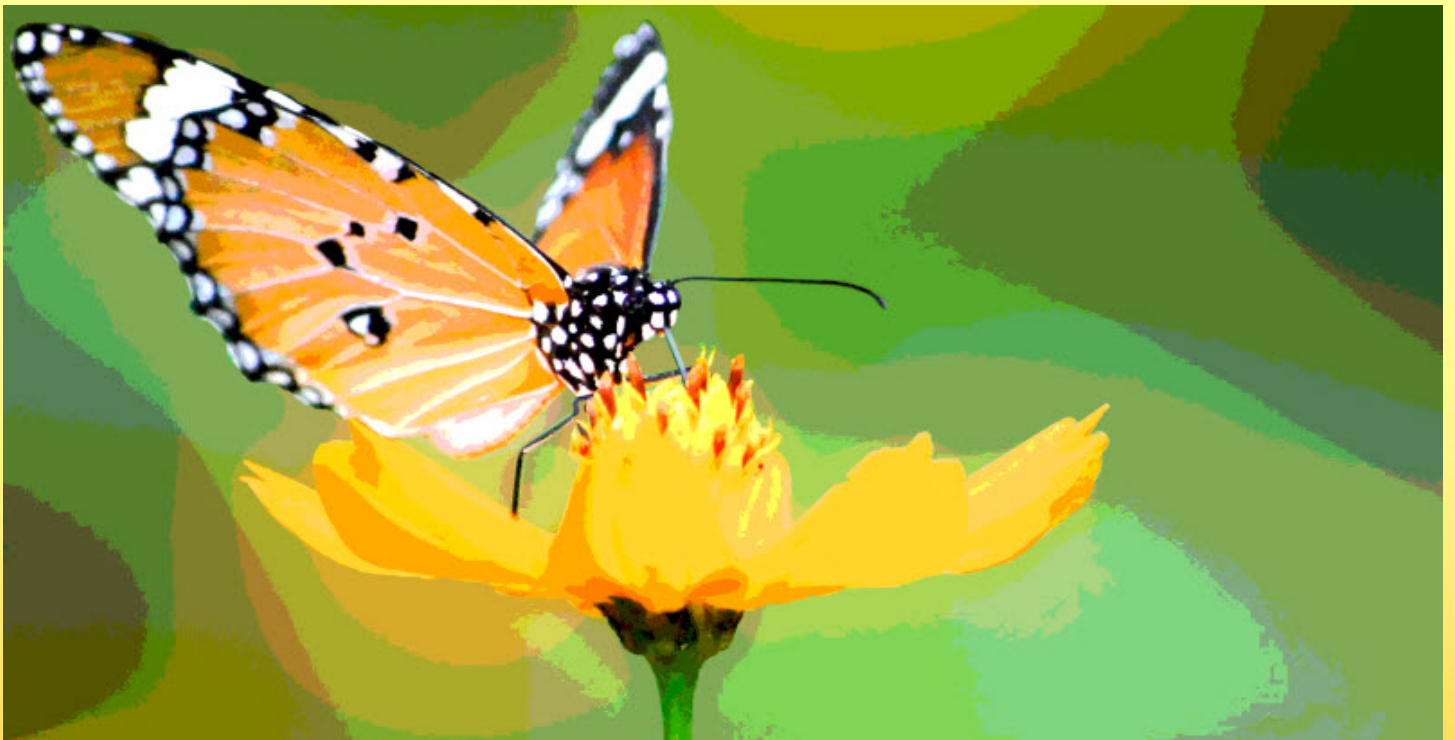


# *Mother's Day*

and the often-missed  
evangelism  
and  
spiritual growth  
opportunities



*Yvon Prehn*

# Mother's Day and the often-missed evangelism and spiritual growth opportunities

Mother's Day Sunday is the third highest day for attendance in churches in North America, running slightly behind Christmas and Easter. Though most churches know this and work hard to make it a special Sunday, many miss significant evangelism and spiritual growth opportunities for that day—because of the day's exclusive focus on mothers.

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying churches shouldn't honor mothers on Mother's Day. They should; it is an important time to praise mothers and to thank God for them. What I'm recommending is that churches not make mothers their exclusive focus, but that they take advantage of the additional ministry opportunity made possible that day because of mothers. Here are three ways to do this, each of which will be discussed in more detail:

1. Evangelism opportunities: unchurched children and spouses
2. Honor moms by challenging them to pray
3. An opportunity to challenge your people to spiritual parenting

Many materials that will help you implement the suggestions in this ebook, including ready to print PDFs, templates that can be modified, additional articles, plus an overview video are available at: <http://www.effectivechurch.com/category/seasonal/mothers-day/>

## Evangelism opportunities: unchurched children and spouses

The reason that churches are so full on Mother's Day is not because it is the only time of year mothers come to church. Most of the mothers at the church are regular attendees. The reason so many people come to church on Mother's Day is the unchurched people in the lives of many mothers rarely, if ever, come to church, but they will come on this day to make mom happy.

***This is a great evangelistic opportunity for your church!***

Following are some ideas on how to make the most of it:

- **Make it a priority in your planning** for your staff to recognize that this is a tremendous evangelistic and outreach opportunity. Make this reality influence what you will say and what communications you have on hand, what you will give out on Mother's Day. The suggestions that follow will help.
- **Assemble a prayer team** to pray, or add to your prayer list, requests specifically for the unsaved, unchurched, and straying family members who will come to church with mom on this Sunday. Pray for sensitivity to their needs. Create attractive invitations for your members to give family members.
- **As leader or pastors acknowledge the visitors** who come on Mother's Day to please an earthly parent and affirm it was a commendable thing to do. Follow that commendation with a lesson/sermon about how they have a heavenly parent who is longing for them come home in faith even more than their mom wanted them to come to church.

- **Be honest** that one of the greatest pains in a mother's heart is that her child does not know Jesus. To be apart in life is hard, even as a child grows up, but to contemplate an eternity without those you love—one Sunday in church won't make up for it.
- **In your sermon, say for the mother what she would want to say to her child.** Be honest that an eternity without Jesus means eternal separation from those we love. Acknowledge this is not easy to say and it is not at all comfortable to talk about on this happy day, but to not say things that can make an eternal difference is not expressing love. Love is honest about the consequences of a life lived apart from God.

## **Do more than preach—additional events can provide great impact and encourage visitors to return**

- **In addition to the times of conviction, also have fun** with visitors and make them comfortable in church—schedule a “Welcome to Our House Brunch for Moms and Adult Children” or an “Visit Your Parent's Sunday School Class Open House” and do a sort of takeoff on Open House days at school.
- **Schedule a very upbeat, outreach oriented Ministry Fair** for that day so visitors can experience and explore what your church does on a regular basis. For example, many single adults (the unchurched adult children who come to church only on Mother's Day) often don't have any idea that many churches have fantastic single adult ministry programs. A table with literature, food, and fun people might be just the thing to get them to attend on a regular basis.
- **For the unchurched husbands** to see the men of your church around a literature table that talks about upcoming construction projects, work days, golf outings or sports events and that is staffed by men who reach out, welcome and engage visiting spouses in conversation is an incredible gift to give to the mom who comes every Sunday on her own.
- **Let visiting family members know you want them to come back next week.** Put a notice in the bulletin and tell them that this would really make mom happy if they returned.
- **Challenge visiting adult children and spouses** to make this Mother's Day the most memorable one ever for their mom by giving her the gift of faith in Jesus—the one Mother's Day gift that will give her joy forever.
- **Be sure you have a clear gospel presentation,** on how to become a Christian, in your bulletin and as a handout to take home. If you don't have them, check out the American Tract Society web site for some excellent ones.

In addition, in your bulletin have a link on your website for those who would like to explore the Christian faith in more detail and have the contact name, number and email of people for unchurched and children of people they can contact confidentially if they have questions or would like to discuss your church, the Christian faith, or what a relationship with Jesus is all about.

## **New born babies are a joy, but there is a greater joy**

To see their unchurched family members come to know Jesus, to become involved in the church, to begin growing in their Christian life—that is the greatest joy and greatest gift you can give any mom.

Make it very clear to your audience what this means to mothers.

## **Honor moms by challenging them to pray**

In addition to honoring moms for all their hard work and faithful service to their families, take time to encourage them with the importance of their prayers. A mother's prayer can not only change an individual life, but can literally change the course of history.

That doesn't always mean that the mom herself will know here on earth the impact of her prayers and the witness of her life. The article: *One Mother's Prayers*, in a variety of PDF formats for you to use, is a powerful, true story of a young man who was far from God in his youth, but whose mother prayed fervently for many years and who live ended very differently than how it began. Whether in your church bulletin, on your website or as a handout in women's ministry groups this piece can greatly encourage moms to pray. This is available, along with many other Mother's Day resources at: <http://www.effectivechurch.com/category/seasonal/mothers-day/>

# **Mother's Day, an opportunity to challenge your people to spiritual parenting**

Many women who attend your church on Mother's Day are not moms. The reasons for that pain are many: they may have lost a child; they may be unmarried and with little prospects of a future marriage. They may be infertile and may not have had enough money for adoption or fertility treatments. They may have prayed for children for years, but for some reason the answer received was "no." The reasons are many, but the pain felt daily by many of these women is deepened significantly on Mother's Day. Often this pain is intensified by unintentionally unthinking and unkind actions of churches on Mother's Day.

## **Don't be unintentionally unkind**

One church handed out flowers for women as they entered the church on Mother's Day. But before a woman got a flower, she was asked, "Are you a mother?" if the answer was "No" the woman was informed that the flowers were for mothers ONLY. In some churches only Moms are clapped for, receive a free brunch, acknowledged as significant or given other public affirmations. It is obvious and on display if a woman is not a mother. If a woman has spent many private hours crying over her inability to have children, imagine her feelings at that time.

Again, these reminders are not meant as a suggestion not to honor mothers, but honor can be done sensitively and with the feelings of the childless women in mind. One way to do this might be to focus briefly on the joy of physical children but then to shift into a challenge for spiritual parenting that all can be part of. You cannot take away the pain of childlessness, but that pain can be transformed into a vision for ministry if, in addition to special actions done for moms, the church actively presents some of the following ideas. One more note: though directed to women, in this article and for this day, mention should be made of the men who are not fathers and for whom often the pain is even more deeply hidden. Include them in the challenges listed below.

## Challenges for spiritual parenting

- Remind all of the women in the church that the option to be a spiritual parent is one that is open to all women, as the prophet Isaiah said in Isa. 54:1 "Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband," says the LORD.

- Remind them that though they may not have physical children and truly insurmountable obstacles may prevent that, that nothing can prevent the birthing and raising of many spiritual children.

- Remind them that to be childless does not mean you do not have God's favor. Jesus never had an earthly child. Consider what that may have meant. He was fully human. Most likely all his childhood friends had children when he left home to travel around Israel and teach. I have wondered if the human part of him didn't feel pain, perhaps sometimes wondering what it would be like to have lived quietly in Nazareth and had a son who would have grown up beside him in the carpenter shop or a little daughter who would bring him water in the middle of a hot day. We know he struggled with God the Father over the cross and I wonder if in some lonely early morning prayer times he struggled with the wish that a child, like the children who loved him and clamored to be on his lap as he traveled and taught, that one could be his, truly, humanly, physically his.

But Jesus didn't have physical children and neither have many of the great leaders of the church, such as Paul. Yet because they didn't have physical children, does not mean they did not have spiritual children. Paul called Timothy, "His dear son," and Jesus often referred to his followers as his children.

You must be honest in your challenge that embracing spiritual parenting is not easy. It requires all the commitment, patience, and life-long support of physical parenting if it is to be done well. Like physical children also, spiritual children will learn far more from what they see than what they are told. Spiritual parents must live lives of holiness, discipline, and love for Jesus if that is the kind of life they want emulated by their spiritual children.

In addition, there are many spiritual orphans in every church—those who perhaps started a relationship with the Lord in college or another place, but

who have moved and have been wandering spiritually since then. Challenge the potential spiritual parents in your church to help raise to maturity those around them who are young and weak in the family of God.

Finally, remind prospective spiritual parents that in addition to the commitment, work and possible pain of spiritual parenting, the words of the apostle John, who said near the end of a long life of ministry adventures and trials: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth (3 John 4)."

### **This might be a message for the Sunday after Mother's Day**

You could also put this material on your website so that people who do not come on Mother's Day will see it. Because you have so many visitors that day, it is easy to miss the people who are not there. Those people include the women who do not have children who quietly avoid Mother's Day at church because the internal pain and insensitivity of people is simply too much to bear. For weeks prior to Mother's Day the childless are confronted with advertisements in print, on TV, the internet and every imaginable communication medium that remind them of what they do not have and perhaps never will have.

For the moms whose children are physically alive, but who were not at church on Mother's Day or perhaps are never around, watching other moms with happy families, children and grandchildren can also be emotionally wrenching.

A message the week after Mother's Day, if presented in an all-inclusive encouraging way and challenging everyone to be a spiritual parent can be a way to fill an empty place in a heart and heal pain. God put the desire to nurture the young in every heart and he has provided a way in his church to make that possible for everyone.

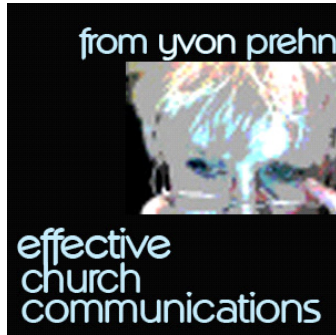
### **If you get a negative response**

You can try to be sensitive and caring and you should, but don't be surprised if you are told it didn't help. Or if you don't get a positive response or receive an angry one, remember that people react in many, not always pleasant, ways to hidden pain.

There are no reasons, explanations, or solutions for the depths of some pain. The best we can do at those times is to share Jesus and lead people to his love and comfort and pray that it will be accepted.

There is a reason that the Bible tells us that someday God will wipe away our tears. Some hurts can never heal on earth. All we can do is hold tightly to the one who promises that someday all will be well.

## Additional Resources for Mother's Day & Effective Church Communication



To help you implement the recommendations above for Mother's Day, click on this link: <http://www.effectivechurchcom.com/category/seasonal/mothers-day/>

### About the author and additional links

Yvon Prehn is the founder, director, and primary content creator of the training site for church communicators: <http://www.effectivechurchcom.com>, a website that provides simple, practical training in print and digital communications to help churches fully fulfill the Great Commission.

The Effective Church Communications website has articles, many training videos, ready-to-print templates and PDFs for church communicators. It has hundreds of entries that can do everything from equip a beginning church communicator to challenging a senior staff member to be more effective in their church communications.

Yvon Prehn has also written numerous books and she blogs, tweets, and creates videos about church communications. To connect with Yvon Prehn and for additional resources for Effective Church Communications:

**Effective Church Communications Training website:**

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