**TEACHERS (#4)**

***Gifted Hands***

Many have come to know the name of Ben Carson. He is the outgoing Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). He ran in the primary of 2015 for the office of President of the United States. But many have not heard his remarkable story of a young black boy from the ghettos of inner-city Detroit who became a rags-to-riches inspiration for thousands of disadvantaged kids.

It was about 1991 while looking over a row of biography books in a Barnes-and-Noble Bookstore that I stumbled across a volume that intrigued me. *Gifted Hands,* by Dr. Ben Carson, captured my attention, for it was the autobiography of a neurosurgeon from Johns Hopkins Hospital who had performed some of the most amazing “miracle” surgeries in the world. I pulled it off the shelf, plopped myself down on a reading chair, and thought I would skim it for a few minutes before heading back to work. Hours later I was closing the book, having read it from cover to cover. I became a huge Dr. Carson fan from that day forward. In 2009 I watched the movie adaptation of *Gifted Hands* and became inspired again to try to be the best I can be, regardless of circumstances.

Ben, and his older brother Curtis, were abandoned by their womanizing father when he was nine years old. It devastated him. Sonya, his mom, had to work three jobs every day just to pay the rent and put food on the table. The two boys seemed destined to failure, not being able to measure up to other kids in school. Ben was called “stupid” and “dumb” and “worthless” due to his low self-esteem. Their mother would not tolerate failure and insisted they could do as good as any other kid if they would only apply themselves. She became a non-stop encourager of her two boys to rise and shine and become God’s gift to mankind. Curtis became an aeronautical engineer, while Ben became a world-renowned pediatric neurosurgeon who performed the world’s first separation of conjoined twins at the brain.

I highly recommend you read the book (and view the movie too if you wish). Why? To show each of us, once again, the power of a mother’s love. The greatest teacher we will probably ever have in our lifetime is the day-in and day-out example of a mother. Ben and Curtis Carson, and a million kids just like them, have overcome great obstacles to make something worthy of God’s unique gift to each of us, for we are all “*fearfully and wonderfully made*” (Psa. 139:13-16). The very title “*Gifted Hands”* comes from Sonya Carson’s continual reminder to young Ben of what God can do with each of us if we will be let His providence work in our life.

The same story could be told over and over again in the lives of most followers of Christ. Most of us owe a great deal of who we are or what we have become to the love and support of our greatest teacher of our youth – our mothers.

The Biblical stories of a mother’s love are given “*for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*” (Rom. 15:4). From the inferred story of Jochebed’s training of baby Moses – how else would he have known his origin and his God? (Exo. 2), to Hannah’s powerful influence on little Samuel, especially her powerful prayer life (I Sam. 1-2), to king Lemuel’s mother who imparted to him very sage advice (Prov. 31), to Elizabeth’s faith instilled in her son John, the forerunner of Christ (Lk. 1), and to Mary storing up in her heart many things she would teach her miraculous infant as He “*grew in wisdom, stature, in favor with God and man*” (Lk. 2:19, 52).

I firmly believe mothers are the most impactful teachers most of us will ever have, regardless of the academic credentials of school teachers or college professors. Just consider some of the lessons we have learned from them as recorded in the Proverbs:

*“My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; For they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck.”*(Prov. 1:8-9)

*“My son, keep your father’s command, and do not forsake the law of your mother.
Bind them continually upon your heart; Tie them around your neck.
When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you;
And when you awake, they will speak with you.”* (Prov. 6:20-22)

*“Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.
Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.
The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise child will delight in him.
Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice.*(Prov. 23:22-25)

And no study of the powerful impact of mothers as our greatest teachers would be complete without the superlative description of the *worthy woman* from king Lemuel’s wise mother. After a lengthy rehearsal of her tireless example of love for her family we then learn of the epitaph that hangs on many a tombstone from mother’s who have now passed to their reward:

*Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her:
“Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all.”
Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, And let her own works praise her in the gates.* (Prov. 31:28-31)

While Ben Carson dedicated his book *Gifted Hands* to his mother, in reality all of us are writing an autobiography one page (i.e. one day) at a time. When all is said and done as we stand before our Maker we might all be tempted to turn and find our mothers and offer a heart-felt dedication to her as we rise up and call her blessed.

Mom, on this nearly fourth anniversary of dad’s passing, I dedicate this to you, my greatest teacher.

I love you. – Rick