

Metro Lutheran  
Positive Parenting  
May 2007

## THE GIFT OF MAY 7<sup>TH</sup>

It was a little hurt ... at least, in retrospect.

The first year that Les and I were married, nothing went right on my birthday. My parents, who had always made my birthday a "Queen for a Day" experience, were in Europe, their first trip abroad together, and they hadn't sent a card, they hadn't sent a present. My husband of nine months was in medical school and distracted and not good at remembering things like that anyway. I bought steak and a bottle of wine ... and waited. At 11:00pm, he called to say that he wasn't going to make it home from the hospital that night. Oh, well, I had a brother who loved me. For heaven's sake, he was 20 and in college, and it never occurred to him. But it was all going to be okay because my precious mother-in-law loved me. She made things special. She wouldn't forget ... but, she did. Oh, did I have all the ingredients I needed for a pity party!

The next month, we were in Ohio, visiting Les' mom. She turned to me with her 1000 watt smile, and beamed, "Well, girl, I know someone who has a birthday next month." I responded, quizzically, "Who?" "You!" she crowed, with delight. "May 7<sup>th</sup>." "No, Mom," I responded. "It was March 7<sup>th</sup>." Crestfallen doesn't begin to describe her face. Mom never hurt anyone intentionally. All who knew her described her as thoughtful and caring. Then, I poured out my woes of a birthday gone bad. She was loving and empathetic and apologetic. She said, "I am so sorry. I wouldn't have hurt you for the world. You know that I never forget how much I love you." It was a balm, and I felt so much better.

Needless to say, she never again forgot my birthday. She was the woman who read every card in the store, to select just exactly the right one. She kept her eyes open all year for just the right gift. They were always there. On time. But that wasn't all. Beginning that year, every May 7<sup>th</sup>, I also received a beautiful card and a check from Mom Sharpe. It was our special holiday, to celebrate the love between us that healed a sorrow.

Les' mother died eight years ago. Not a single May 7<sup>th</sup> has come without remembering her special grace. An apology. Making up for it. Transforming pain into a special shared holiday. This May 7<sup>th</sup>, I'll smile at the memory, thanking God for this amazing woman.

I only hope that I have passed on the same grace-filled legacy of recovering from unintentional hurt to my children, to my friends, to my colleagues. As much as I wish it had been otherwise, I have missed the birthday of a cherished friend and not one, but two of my treasured colleagues. But there are other hurts I've caused, sins of both omission and commission. Mostly with my family. I have learned to say, "I am sorry. Can you forgive me? What can I do to make it right, to make it better?"

One of the treasures of our faith in Christ, a gift bestowed with the waters of our baptism, is to name and claim our sin, to ask for forgiveness, to heal. Let's use this gift generously, especially in our families.

### FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. With your children, model saying, "I am sorry. Can you forgive me?"
2. When someone asks for your forgiveness, don't dismiss it with, "Oh, that's okay." Learn to say, "I forgive you."
3. Tell your kids about times you made a mistake or hurt another person. Let them know that even now you are sorry about it.
4. Admit how hard it sometimes is to say, "I am sorry. Can you forgive me?"

