

A Man's Guide to Mother's Day

If you're like me, you've probably never done much advance planning for Mother's Day. Yet motherhood is one of the highest callings any woman can have. What an opportunity to change the world for Christ! In this article, I want to show you how to make this the best Mother's Day ever.

This year, why not do something for all the moms in your life? That might include your wife, mother, mother-in-law, married daughters, daughters-in-law, grandmothers and granddaughters.

Forethought: The Key Ingredient

In a moment, we'll talk about a lot of specific ideas. But first, there's one key ingredient that supersedes all others in making a big impression on Mother's Day: forethought. The big idea for Mother's Day is: *Anything counts if it's not last minute.*

For years, I was a last-minute guy. I'm one of those guys who would work the picked-over Hallmark card racks on Saturday night, after dark at the 24/7 drugstore. I'd be one of those guys standing in line at the grocery store florist department on Sunday morning to find the best of the "Is this all that's left?" corsages. I'd think, *Oh, that would be a good idea*, when I'd see the Mother's Day chocolates in the checkout line. (Boy, am I grateful for those impulse-purchase displays!)

So what's wrong with that? "Last minute" says "not that important." She will probably never say that—maybe never even think it exactly that way. But "last minute" says, "I didn't care enough to give any forethought."

On the other hand, when we think ahead, it shows up in the details. Forethought gives your imagination time to work. "Little things" are what make moms feel honored. They appreciate something planned in advance.

Now, some ideas ...

The Letter

Idea: Each year, write one of your moms a special letter. Start with your wife. Next year write to your own mom if she's living. A couple of weeks out, take a sheet of paper and write across the top, "Why I Love and Appreciate _____." Let it incubate.

Every day or two, write down something you especially love or appreciate. Your goal will be to write a two-page letter one week before Mother's Day with specific stories that illustrate each quality you mention. For example, if you wrote, "I really appreciate your kindness," you would also want to tell her why. Maybe you would write, "It touches my heart to see the way you treated those children with such tenderness when we visited the hospital the other day."

The Dinner

Idea: Invite all family members to a special Mother's Day dinner or brunch. Let the restaurant cook! If that won't work, then you and the children cook. If you don't have a big family, consider getting other families involved. Consider a cookout with an afternoon of games.

The Purchases

You have several items you must buy and several more to consider. The must-buy items are a card and flowers or a corsage. Consider these items the minimums. If you are feeling financially expansive, go for a gift. Even a small gift like chocolates can be a big hit. There are some other ideas below.

Set Up a Planning Calendar and Checklist

Don't just react to Mother's Day. Make it happen. Here's a schedule to use and adapt. Make it the foundation for your own Mother's Day traditions.

Two Weeks Out

- Start collecting thoughts for “The Letter.” Prepare the invitation list (children, relatives, others) to invite to “The Dinner” that focuses on your wife first, then the other moms.
- Order any online or catalog gifts or gift certificates. Give a copy of this article to all the men in your church. If you are a pastor or worship leader, incorporate ideas from this article into your annual traditions.
- Invite guests to your Mother’s Day dinner or brunch so they have plenty of time to mark their calendars—also shows forethought!
- Be sure to make progress on “The Letter.”
- Other _____
- Other _____

One Week Out

- Sit down with your accumulated notes and write “The Letter.”
- Purchase Mother’s Day cards. Mail all out-of-town cards and “The Letter.”
- Make a dinner or brunch reservation at her favorite place.
- Order flowers and corsages.
- Purchase chocolate, gifts or local gift certificates.
- Prepare homemade gift certificates (for chores, dinner out, girls’ night out). Make a list of everyone to call or visit on Mother’s Day.
- Other _____
- Other _____

The Day Before

- Have flowers delivered “The Day Before” to prove forethought!

- Other _____
- Other _____

The Big Day

- Start with a card to your wife (with a long, mushy note).
- Give “The Letter” to your wife. (Kind words in private.)
- Give her a corsage to wear to church, if applicable.
- Go to your Mother’s Day brunch or dinner. Present gifts or gift certificates (purchased or homemade). (Kind words in public.)
- Make phone calls to out-of-town moms.
- Visit local moms.

Immediate Family Situations

- ***We have no kids.*** Focus on your own mothers and grandmothers. Orchestrate “The Dinner.” Be servants.
- ***We are expecting.*** Dad-to-be, this is your big chance. You can start well by making a “Pre-Delivery Mom” card. In fact, make two if you don’t know the gender—one for a boy and one for a girl. Tell her to keep whichever one turns out to be right!
- ***We have young children.*** A woman’s self-esteem is usually at its lowest point when she has young children. It’s hard to stay pretty, keep a clean house and get everything done. Earn points by giving this mom homemade gift certificates, such as “Good for one deep house cleaning” or “Good for one night out while I baby-sit.” Have the kids draw Mother’s Day cards. Teach them to honor Mom each year on her special day. Assign your kids to look on Google and print the history of Mother’s Day. (America’s first Mother’s Day was May 10, 1908—a church service to honor the mother of Anna Jarvis of West Virginia, a spinster who really missed her deceased mom. In 1914, Congress passed a resolution, and President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed Mother’s Day an official

national holiday.)

- ***We have teenagers.*** I'll pray for you. Seriously, though, many teens worship their moms. Include them by letting each teen add to "The Letter." Show them the importance of building Mother's Day into their value system.
- ***We have college students.*** Surprise mom by flying the kids home. Or arrange to go there. Give students a heads-up one week out so they can get a card in the mail. Call the day before and remind them to give her a call.
- ***Our children are grown.*** Hopefully, by now they understand the significance of Mother's Day. Include them in "The Dinner." Encourage them to write their own "Letter." Give them a copy of this article.
- ***Our children have children.*** "The Dinner" is getting bigger! If you are in town, get together. If your grandchildren are out of town, Mother's Day brings great weather nearly everywhere. Pack your bags and go. Respect the traditions your children want to set up. This article may help them too. Remember: Anything counts if it's not last minute. Forethought is the key to showing that you really care. Last-minute loses.

Application

Why not share this article with the men in your church and agree to implement it together? Learn from one another and share ideas. After Mother's Day, get together and talk about how things turned out. End with a time of prayer for the mothers in your life, asking for God's blessing during the next year.

Note from Patrick Morley: *It's been a few years since we published this article. With Mother's Day just around the corner, I decided to give it a fresh look. May God richly bless all the mothers in your life!*

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building one of Florida's 100 largest privately held companies, in 1991, he founded Man in the Mirror, a non-profit organization to help men find meaning and purpose in life. Dr. Morley is the bestselling author of The Man in the Mirror, No Man Left Behind, Dad in the Mirror, and A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines.