

This Mother's Day, Remember Moms Who May Need Extra Help

Families make Mother's Day memories in so many beautiful ways. A teenager makes Mom breakfast in bed, a child surprises her with a clean room, a husband buys a bracelet, the family gathers at a restaurant table—all to let Mom know how special she is.

With this special day in May this weekend, I walk down memory lane, remembering the celebrations, the accomplishments and the small, intimate moments my kids and I shared. But often with these happy moments, I also recall the strides we made and the challenges we overcame to value these triumphs.

We must remember that a mother is a mother every day of her life. For most moms, even Mother's Day is not a day off. There is always care that needs to be given to someone. Remembering her and giving her honor carves a deep groove in our own hearts, helping us to remember that joy of being a blessing, which surpasses the feeling of receiving a blessing.

This year, many mothers will have the responsibilities but will see few of these honoring gestures. For many in Southern California especially, Mother's Day morning will not open with the smell of breakfast or a nice surprise. Instead, when Mom awakes, a stream of worry will cross her mind, the flow continued from the previous day.

The problem today for many moms is that gas prices skyrocketed at the same time grocery costs and other living expenses escalated as well. For example, according to the National Diaper Bank Network, a family spends between \$75 and \$100 a month to keep one baby clean, and it's getting more expensive.

A pack of diapers now costs over \$27.

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The poor and middle-class families have been hard-hit. It's even worse for disabled mothers who cannot work and single mothers who cannot work enough. They have to scrimp on groceries to pay for gas. They deleted meat, toiletries and even clothing to scrape by. And they can't even consider relocating or downsizing because real estate prices have skyrocketed.

My hope is that politicians and policy makers this Mother's Day will keep these people in mind as they consider legislation that affects the cost of living for such families.

We also can't forget that over 30% of families are led by single parents. This economy is very difficult for single mothers who have no support from fathers.

When I first heard stories 20 years ago about parents here in Los Angeles at risk of losing their children due to the simple fact that they lacked basic resources, I knew we had to intervene. At the Dream Center, we launched our Foster Care Intervention outreach program to help these families by partnering with the Department of Children and Family Services. Since then, we've been providing essential furniture, food, clothing, appliances and other basic necessities required to allow parents to retain or regain custody of their children.

Our goal is to help keep as many families together as possible so that their children do not end up in the foster care system and to be a support system for these parents and children.

These families are typically fleeing abuse and are labeled as "neglectful." But from what I've seen firsthand, it is rarely a case of neglect as much as it is a cry for help with no one to turn to. You'd be surprised to know that in many cases, providing access to basic needs can mean the difference in

keeping families together.

Witnessing families who are so touched when they see our outreach team arrive to build and provide furniture and other basic necessities is a beautiful reminder of God's love and grace. He is the one who pushes me to continue to find a need and fill it for the mothers who desperately need it.

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One mother, Adriana, was blown away by just some simple furniture we provided for her family.

"I am very thankful for the Dream Center, and for the furniture provided for my children," Adriana told our staff. "We've been without these basic needs for a very long time. Thank you for the love. I have hope for the future now."

I'll never forget hearing those words: *"I have hope for the future now."*

It really reminded me of what we're up against. No parent should lose their children or feel hopeless as they navigate tough financial times and simply need a hand from someone who cares.

My prayer is that everyone reading this would feel compelled to make this Mother's Day bright by lending a hand to a struggling mom. If we each reach beyond ourselves to help some of these in their plight, we'll make someone's Mother's Day so much brighter.

If we will each look around and help someone in need on such a special day, we might even start a new Mother's Day tradition. And when we help others, we experience the joy of being a blessing to others that eclipses even the joy of being blessed ourselves.

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Caroline Barnett is the executive director of the Dream Center Foundation and co-pastor of the Los Angeles Dream Center and Angelus Temple Church alongside her husband, Matthew Barnett. The Los Angeles Dream Center is a faith-based nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of individuals and families in the city of Los Angeles through residential and outreach programs. What started out as a desire to serve those in need has now grown with their leadership into a global movement of love and service, with nearly 100 Dream Centers helping communities worldwide. To learn more about the work of the Dream Center, [click here](#).