

CHARACTER BUILDING

Psalm 8

Romans 5:1-5

June 3, 2007

By Marianne Brock

Today, I'm going to tell you about my mom.
Most people think that she's a really nice person.
I'm here to tell you that she's NOT.

For as long as I can remember, my mom has been making me do all sorts of things that I don't want to do.

Let's start with the vegetables... they were always a big thing with her. We had to have vegetables at EVERY meal. Green beans, wax beans, cooked carrots, beets, peas, ... you name it, we had to eat it. For a long time, my worst mealtime memory was of the dreaded "Green Beans in White Sauce," (yech) surpassed only by the "Mixed Vegetable Era of 1981." Seriously, my parents bought a CASE of frozen mixed vegetables – because it was economical- and, I'm telling you, we had mixed vegetables FOUR NIGHTS A WEEK FOR 10 MONTHS STRAIGHT!!

And when I dared to mention in a very polite tone that I really didn't like mixed vegetables, and why did we always have to have them, and when were they ever going to serve something good around here, and why did I have to eat this stuff anyway, my mother said the same thing she said about everything:

"Do it. It's good for you. It builds character."

If vegetables aren't enough to gain your sympathy, how about this: my mother made me clean my room AT LEAST once a year. She would stand there in the doorway and tell me how bad it was, that she couldn't even see the floor, and that the place looked like a pigpen, and that she was going to come in there with a bulldozer!! OK, three things: 1. Why did she need to see the floor? It was not all that interesting. 2. I grew up in the country. I read Charlotte's Web. I knew what a pigpen looked like, and my room did NOT look like a pigpen. And 3. How did she think she was going to get a bulldozer around the bend in our staircase?

But when I put up protest and asked WHY I had to clean my room, she said, "Just do it. It's good for you. It builds character."

Or how about this? One day, I decided to decorate our neighbor lady's porch by picking all of the flowers in her flowerbed and stuffing them into the openings in the decorative railing. When my mom found out that I had picked all of the neighbor's flowers, she marched me down to the end of the block and into the neighbor's house and stood there and waited until I apologized for what I had done. The neighbor was very nice about it, maybe because I was crying so hard that I could hardly talk, and she said that those flowers were nothing important to her and that no harm had been done. On the way home I tried to tell my mom that I hadn't needed to apologize; that Mrs. Snook didn't care.

And do you know what she said?

“It was good for you. It builds character.”

I often wonder if my mother ever wishes she hadn't encouraged my character building quite so much...

I also wonder how she found the time to be so concerned about my character. She has a lot to do. She's a nurse at the hospital, so she sometimes stays up all night long making sure that people who are very sick or very hurt live through the night. She takes care of the people in our town by taking their blood pressures any time they ask. She helps old people wash their windows. She is a Daisy Scout leader, even though she doesn't have any little girls any more. She makes sure that people have macaroni and cheese when someone they love dies. When people are sad, she makes sure that they don't have to be sad alone. She makes sure that there are new candles in the candleholders at church, and she made sure that the new pastor's little girl had a yellow bedroom on the day she moved in. She gives good advice but not in a “preachy way,” like some people do.

Even though she was very busy with a lot of other important things, my mom took the time to make me do things I didn't want to do, not to make me suffer, it turns out, but because she wanted me to grow up to be a healthy, respectful, and responsible person. She took the time to teach me these things because she loved me – I was one of her two favorite children in all the world.

Sometimes God asks us to do very hard things. Sometimes we get picked on, or we get sick or hurt, or sometimes we have to go places that aren't very pretty or comfortable. Sometimes Mrs. Enney goes away for the weekend and you have to come up with a children's story even though you're pulling your hair out trying to get ready for summer camp. Sometimes we have to do things that are difficult and we don't understand why. Living through difficult times is one of the ways we learn how to be a Child of God

And isn't it amazing that God, who is so busy taking care of so many things – way busier than my mom – sent Jesus, His son to this earth so that we can learn how to be His children? And even though we are just one little person in the big congregation of Trinity Lutheran Church, in Camp Hill, a tiny little speck in the earth, which is a tiny little speck in our galaxy, which is a tiny little speck in the universe, God looks through the stars and the planets and the clouds and the mountains and the oceans and the treetops and says to each one of us “You are my favorite. I love you. Let me show you how to be my child.”

The End

Kids Sheet



Marianne, not wanting to clean her room.



Marianne's House
(you can't see the
messy bedroom)



Marianne's Mom
(bad hair day)

Living through difficult times is one of the
ways we learn how to be a Child of God...
and it builds character!