



The Christian Girl's Guide to Your Mom by Marilyn Hilton

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(Chapter 1)

Dear Daughter,

Welcome! This book is about you & Mom. That's your mom, not your best friend's mom or the mom who drives the carpool or the one who leads your Bible study. This book will help both of you figure out how to make your relationship the best it can be.

You'll take some quizzes and surveys, read parts of the Bible and jot down your thoughts. You'll do some activities on your own and together. By the end of the book, you and Mom will probably understand each other better and love each other more, just as God wants.

You can use this book at any pace you want. For example, you can't start by reading one chapter each week. Then adjust your pace to one that feels most comfortable for you.

You can do this book entirely by yourself, or with Mom. There's plenty of space to write in this book. But if you'd rather have your very own space to write, you can use a diary, journal, or notebook.

Are you ready? Let's start!

Fact 1: SHE'S MOM

I know because. . .

- She answers to "Mom" (or something like that).
- She prays when the dishwasher leaks, the cat's on the roof, her boss is on the phone, the baby just spit up again and I can't find my homework.
- She uses drive-through windows for burgers, prescriptions, dry-cleaning and doughnuts.
- When she's mad she calls me by my full name.

There's no doubt about it—the woman in your house who sometimes calls you by your full name, who drives you all around town, who teaches you how to keep the red socks out of the white laundry load and who somehow does a week's worth of chores and activities in one day before crashing onto bed—is Mom.

By now, you've spent several years together. But, how well do you know her? She's your mom (and she wouldn't trade that for anything), but she's many other things, too. For example, she could be any or all of these: a Christian, a wife, a friend, a daughter, a sister, a church member (possibly a church leader) and an employee. She might be a stepmom, a widow or a grandma.

God has given you and your mom a very special relationship. Sometimes your relationship with your mom feels like the warmest and closest one you'd ever want, and other times it might not seem so special at all. You might think Mom understands you completely, gives you everything you ask for and does everything you want. At other times, she gets in the way of all your fun and seems to have no idea what it's like to be your age.

But Mom does know what it's like to be your age, because not too long ago she WAS a girl your age. If you ask her what her life was like then, she can probably talk about it as if it were last year. Sure, she wore different kinds of clothes and hairstyles, listened to different music and used different words than you do to describe things in her life, but she had the same hopes and dreams that you do, felt the same joys, frustrations and disappointments and prayed the same kinds of prayers.

Mom asks God for the same things for you that your grandma asked for Mom.

Let's spend some time looking at you and Mom from both sides and then see how God is an essential part of this incredibly important relationship.

The Two of You

Mom

She makes you giggle, but sometimes she drives you nuts. She's sweet yet crabby at times. You love her, but you think she doesn't always understand what you say or how you feel. One minute you're both getting along great, and the next minute you can't believe she just said THAT. (And sometimes you can't believe YOU just said that!)

She works at home, and maybe she also works in an office, a restaurant, a factory or a hospital. She's married to your dad, or your stepdad, or she's not married to anyone. She's tall, short slender, plump, soft, toned. She races around like her hair's on fire, or she's as slow as a turtle getting everything done. She's silly, serious and maybe even a little embarrassing.

Sometimes she says things that are either really old-fashioned or just way too cool.

She dresses in her own style, or one straight out of the magazines or maybe in your style.

Mom says things like:

- “This isn’t an all-night diner.”
- “Take a number.”
- “You’re my grown-up girl.”
- “This room looks like a toxic waste dump.”
- “Don’t swallow your gum because it stays in your stomach forever.”
- “Will her parents be home?”
- “You are beautiful through and through.”
- “Hurry uuup! We’re gonna be laaaate!”
- “I love you with all my heart.”
- “Hold your horses, please. I don’t have four hands/three heads/five legs.”
- “You’ve already got a zillion pairs of shoes!”
- “That’s not a good web site for you.”
- “I don’t know where your P.E. shorts are. Do I look like Sherlock Holmes?”
- “You’ll always be my baby.”

BARMOMeter 1

See how well you know Mom by predicting how she might react to different situations. Think about each example below, and then circle the answer that best describes her.

1. You have to finish a book report before dinner because you want to go to youth group tonight. But you forget to set the table (one of your chores)—for the third time this week! Mom:
 - a. sets the table for you, as usual, and says she understands.
 - b. sets the table for you but says you can’t go out tonight.
 - c. sets everyone’s place except yours, says you can’t go out tonight and takes money out of your allowance.
 - d. grounds you for a week.

2. You plan to wear your teal blue sweater to a party on Saturday night. At 4:00 that day you remember you left it in the bottom of your closet with a big salsa stain on it. Mom:
 - a. rushes the sweater to the one-hour cleaners.
 - b. tells you to choose a different sweater and be prepared to pay the cleaning bill.
 - c. picks out the ugliest sweater to wear, and lectures you about responsibility.
 - d. says you can’t go to the party.

3. Mom doesn't want you to hang out with a particular girl because she uses rough language and wears "inappropriate" clothes. You like the girl anyway and think you can be a good example for her. Mom:
 - a. gives in quickly—you can see her anytime, anywhere.
 - b. suggests you invite her to church, but that's the only way you can spend time with her.
 - c. tells you she can come to your house but only when she or Dad is home.
 - d. says the case is closed and won't talk about it anymore.

4. You're invited to a sleepover, but you heard that boys have also been invited. You don't want to look dumb and say "no," but the idea of a mixed sleepover makes you really uncomfortable. Mom:
 - a. says it's okay, as long as the parents are there all night.
 - b. asks you how you feel about it.
 - c. says you can go if you want to, but only until 11:00.
 - d. immediately calls the parents and tells them they're out of their minds.

5. Aunt Leslie pops in with your creepy cousin Ian just as you're heading out to your friend Taylor's house. Mom:
 - a. waves you out the back door without a word.
 - b. tells you to say your hello's and then you can go.
 - c. suggests you invite Taylor to your house so you can both hang out with Ian.
 - d. tells you to cancel your plans for the evening.

Count the number of a, b, c, and d answers.

- If you answered all or mostly "a," Mom trusts you to make your own choices in most situations. If this is okay with you, then the two of you should get along fine. You can predict that she'll rely on you to make the right choices. If you want more help knowing what's right or wrong, tell her so.
- If you answered all or mostly "b," Mom trusts you most of the time to make the right choices and helps you see other possibilities. You can predict that she'll make decisions for the little things and leave the big decisions to you. If you want more input from her, tell her so.
- If you answered all or mostly "c," Mom wants to continue teaching and guiding you as you grow into your teens. She offers you fewer alternatives and makes her preferences clear. You can predict that she'll make most decisions for you and leave the little ones to you. If you want more control over what happens, tell her so.
- If you answered all or mostly "d," Mom shows her love for you by making almost every decision for you. You may see this style as too rigid, with few choices for you to make. But Mom sees it as protecting you from harm. You can predict that she'll decide just about everything for you. If you want more control, tell her why your choices make sense for you and show that you can make the right choices.

- If your answers were mixed, Mom uses a combination of all these styles. She responds to each situation individually. She's harder to predict, but her style might also be easier to adapt to.

You

You're not a little girl anymore, and the things you liked to do a few years ago are boring or too childish now. You probably like to talk on the phone, email and IM with your friends. You also like to spend time by yourself in your room thinking, reading or listening to music.

Sometimes Mom treats you like a kid, and sometimes she expects you to think and act like you're older. It's confusing because even though you just want to be left alone, you still want Mom to be there for you and take care of you.

Do any of these sound like you?

- "I used to think Mom was perfect. Now I'm not so sure. What happened?"
- "Mom really embarrasses me with what she says or does sometimes."
- "When I want to talk, it's hard to get her attention because she's always busy or tired."
- "I want to grow up but she doesn't seem to want me to."
- "She always asks me about my friends, won't let me go on dates and criticizes my clothes and my music."
- "I can't talk to her about things like bras and periods. I'd rather talk to my best friend about those things."
- "Sometimes Mom and Dad fight, and it makes me feel sad and scared. How can I get them to stop?"
- "I can't imagine Mom ever being my age. She's so old!"

Understanding Mom during this time can be confusing. Growing up isn't easy!

FAQs

Q: My mom and dad adopted me when I was a baby. Now Mom's having a baby of her own. I'm scared that they won't love me as much.

A: You say your mom is having a baby of her own, but that's exactly what you are to her. When your mom and dad adopted you, they chose you to be their very own. They would not have loved you any more if your mom had given birth to you. When the new baby comes, expect some changes in your family. These changes won't come because your mom and dad stop loving you, but because having a new baby changes a family's routine. Your parents might have less time to spend with you or be more tired, but as your little brother or sister grows, life will get easier for all of you. In the meantime, you can show love to your mom by asking her to teach you how to change a diaper, feed with a bottle

and bathe the baby. All these things will give your mom more time and energy for you. And, the ore time you spend with your new brother or sister, the better you will know each other. Your mom will be even more proud of you for being a good sibling!

Q: I love my mom. I love my dad, too. Sometimes I get the feeling that Mom is jealous of Dad when he and I spend more time together and talk about things that she and I don't. What can I do?

A: Think of it this way: your mom carried you in her body for nine months, and then took care of you night and day for many years. You've always depended on her and you still need her to help you get through the rest of your growing-up years. But you're also seeking the special love and feedback of your dad, and your mom feels left out of conversations and situations in which she used to play a major role. She wonders if you need her anymore—or even if you love her as much as you loved her as a little kid. She might even be more aware of her own faults and shortcomings now that you're old enough to see them and form opinions of her. What can you do? Go on errands now and then with her if you have a choice, suggest things you can do together and tell her you love her. Explain to her how you feel and what you're thinking. She wants you to have a strong, positive relationship with your dad, but she also wants to know that you still need her.

Q: Mom still wants to stand with me in the school line and walk me to my classroom. That was fin when I was little, but now I'm in fifth grade. It's so embarrassing. How can I get her to stop?

A: Moms are torn between doing everything for you to protect you and allowing you to be more independent. Your mom knows she has to let you go but doesn't know exactly when to start—especially if you're the oldest child in the family because she hasn't gone through this “letting go” stuff yet! That said, at fifth grade you are probably old enough to stand in line by yourself and walk in to school with your classmates. Ask your mom for a compromise. At the least, she could see you to the school gates or the playground edge and say good-bye there. If it embarrasses you when she kisses and hugs you in front of your friends, kiss her when you leave the house or the car (before you open the door), or agree on a code phrase that means “I love you” (such as “Did you feed the goldfish?”). That way you will always begin your day with a laugh!

“Before” Snapshot

A “snapshot” shows things the way they were at a particular moment. By answering the questions on the next page, you can take a snapshot of Mom. (At the end of the book you'll take another one to compare.”

1. Set a timer for one minute, and on a sheet of paper write adjectives that describe Mom. Focus on her personality more than her looks. Write as many as you can before time's up (use another sheet of paper if you need it).

2. Now look at the adjectives you wrote. Do you see mostly positive words, negative words or a good mix? Put a checkmark next to each positive adjective. Look closely at each negative one. How would God lovingly reword each one? (For example, “lazy” could be “exhausted” or “bossy” might be “protective.”) Write your reword next to your first word.
3. Do the same for yourself. In one minute, write on a sheet of paper as many adjectives as you can about you. Checkmark the positive ones, then reword the negatives.
4. Earlier, you read some things a mom might say. Now write some that Mom says—good, bad, funny, sad, confusing and so on.
5. Draw a picture of Mom that shows her the way you see her. If you don't want to draw, glue a picture from a magazine or use a photograph.

He's God

Being a mom is the best job in the world, but it can be difficult—especially when her daughter is growing and changing as fast as a sunflower. Yesterday you were her baby and depended on her for everything. When she looks at you today and sees the lovely young woman you're becoming, she's torn between holding onto you and giving you more space.

You've probably heard the expression “Children don't come with instructions.” It means that parents don't get much formal training on how to raise their children—they have to learn as they go along. Just the same, moms don't come with instructions either, so you have to learn how to be a good daughter as you along, too.

Actually, there is an instruction book for you both: the Bible! It's full of information on being a good daughter and mom written by God, the greatest teacher you'll ever know.

God is concerned about everything in your life, including your relationship with Mom. He wants you to talk with each other, laugh with each other and love each other forever. God is always in control of every situation. He has a reason for everything He does, including why He put you and Mom together. You may never know why, but you can relax and feel confident knowing that God is great, good and always knows what He's doing.

Profile: Ruth and Naomi

Ruth's name means: friend (in Hebrew)

Naomi's name means: pleasant (also in Hebrew)

Ruth was born in: Moab, a land southeast of the Dead Sea and Bethlehem

Naomi was born in: we don't know, but she lived in Bethlehem (in Judah, a kingdom in southern Palestine)

Sister-in-law: Orpah (not Oprah!)

Ruth's husband: Mahlon, Naomi's son

Naomi's husband: Elimelech

Ruth lived in Moab with her mom and dad. She and Orpah, another girl from Moab, married two brothers, Mahlon and Chilion, who had fled to Moab with their parents, Naomi and Elimelech, during a great famine in Judah. Neither Ruth nor Orpah had children with their husbands, and within 10 years their husbands and father-in-law all died. This left the girls alone with their mother-in-law, Naomi.

Because all the men in Naomi's family had died, the land in Bethlehem that once belonged to Elimelech and her sons now belonged to Elimelech's male relatives. When Naomi heard that the famine in Judah had ended, she decided to return to her hometown. Without family, money or property, Naomi hoped her relatives would take care of her.

Ruth and Orpah started on the journey to Bethlehem with their mother-in-law. But Naomi tried to convince them to stay in Moab, their hometown, where they had a better chance of marrying new husbands and having children. After some discussion, Orpah agreed and returned to Moab, but Ruth insisted on staying with Naomi.

It was harvest time in Bethlehem, and news of Ruth's devotion to Naomi spread across Bethlehem. So Boaz—one of Naomi's relatives and a wealthy landowner—made sure that Ruth and Naomi could gather plenty of leftover barley from his fields. As Ruth went to the fields every day to pick up the food, Boaz watched and admired her effort.

The law back then said that when a man died, his brother or nearest relative must marry the man's widow. Naomi noticed Boaz's admiration and compassion for Ruth, and she urged Ruth to remind Boaz of his obligation to marry her. Boaz knew of a closer relative, but when that man gave away his right to marry Ruth, Boaz and Ruth were free to marry. Boaz also arranged for Elimelech's property to be returned to Naomi.

After Ruth and Boaz married, they had a son named Obed. Obed's grandson was King David of Israel, an ancestor of Jesus.

Because of her selfless devotion and loyalty to widowed Naomi, Ruth was rewarded with a new family, and Naomi lived the rest of her life surrounded by love.

* Read all about Ruth and Naomi in the Book of Ruth.

Time Out!

Naomi and Ruth took care of each other. Without Naomi, Ruth would not have married Boaz and given birth to Obed. Without Ruth, Naomi would have spent the rest of her life depending on other people for a home, food and money.

1. Why did God put Naomi and Ruth together?
2. How do you and Mom take care of each other?
3. How has God taken care of you and Mom?

READ: Psalm 100

PRAY: Dear God, thank You for being You. Thank You for Mom. Please bless us, keep us close to each other and close to You. Amen.

The View

In each chapter you will see this section with questions to ask Mom. (And there are some for Mom to ask you!) You can ask them as part of a formal interview—as if you were a talk show host or roving reporter—or whenever you're curious or want a conversation starter.

Why should you want to interview Mom? One reason is it's one great way for you two to spend some time together and get to know each other better. Another reason is that your answers can become a permanent record of your life right now—like a letter or home video.

Here's the first set of questions. You can always think of your own to ask, too!

For you to ask Mom:

- What did you want to be when you were up? Why?
- Did you ever want to run away from home? Did you do it?
- What are you thankful for?
- What are the three best things about being a mom?
- What do you think heaven is like?

For Mom to ask you:

- What do you want to be when you grow up? Why?
- Describe your idea of a “perfect mom.” Is she someone you know?
- What will you name your kids?
- Which day in your life would you like to live over again?
- What is your favorite holiday? Why?

Checkpoint

Here's where you take stock of your thoughts and feelings so far and plan your strategy before moving to the next topic.

1. What did you learn about Mom or your relationship with her?
2. What did you learn about your relationship with God?
3. How do you know that God is God? (Read Exodus 6:7)
4. What do you hope to get from reading this book?
5. Write a prayer about this fact. Your prayer can be a praise, a request or an "I'm really confused and I need You to help."

PSST!

Some moms raise their children the same way their parents raised them. Other moms try to raise their children by doing the exact opposite of their parents. Ask Mom how her style is the same and different as her parents' style. Knowing this can help you understand why she treats you the way she does.

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www.marilynhilton.com