This is for mothers everywhere. My mother has always been the guiding human force in my life. I have easily passed the halfway mark in terms of years I will spend in this life. Yet it does not seem to matter how old I get, when I even consider doing something she taught me not to do, I can hear my mother's voice in my head saying, "I taught you better than that." She is sort of like a moral compass that occasionally beats me over the head to get my attention. I love my mom.

I watch my own children working their way through life and raising their children. I wonder to myself if they ever hear my voice in their heads giving them moral direction. I know they hear me making puns and quoting things, but I hope they also hear my core beliefs coming through in the crucial moments of their lives.

We have read in Moses 1:39,

> 39 For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass
> the immortality and eternal life of man.

Have you ever wondered why we are God's work and glory? Why invest so much of himself into us, imperfect and fickle as we are, when He has the whole universe to work with. And the universe obeys Him implicitly, which is more than can be said for His own children. What is there in having a child that God would prize that life, that relationship over everything else in the universe?

I would like to take a stab at beginning to answer that question. Admittedly, this is an awkward attempt at best, and I have not had years of time to think my answers through, so I am hoping you will add your thoughts in the comments below.

The Value of Children

In no particular order of importance, here are some random reasons for why parents might value having children.

1. **Children are a part of you.** There is something special about watching your child living a day. Every now and again you see glimpses of you, your spouse, your parent, or a relative, shine through in something your child does or says, a look on her face, or by the way she moves a hand. You see generations reflected in complex combinations, brought together to create a new personality that is as unique as all the relatives who came together to make up that little soul.

2. **Children are an extension of your love.** When my wife and I are long gone, mannerisms, beliefs, looks, and behaviors of both of us will continue on in the lives of our children and their children. It is endearing to see how my wife has influenced our children. She is not their biological mother, but when they need to be practical (not my strong suit), or they need to make their money stretch, (again, not my strong suit), it is to mom that they turn, not me. They know that if they need some sensible financial advice or clever ways to do something or how to fix something, she is the fountain of all knowledge. They come to me for other things, but I find so much pleasure in seeing them place value in her abilities.

When we first got married, Elaine had a daughter, and I had four children. Elaine tried so hard to set some traditions for the family. It seemed like an uphill, and losing battle as she struggled year after year, searching for ways to solidify the family in new traditions. We were both despairing that we had failed when the children were moving out of the house, and we still had not seen any glimmer of the kind of solidarity we had hoped to forge. Then we started to get phone calls for mom's quiche recipe when it was time for General Conference. Elaine always makes quiche for the main session of General Conference. She puts it into the oven as the meeting starts, and at the one hour mark, when it is time for a rest hymn, the quiche is done and breakfast is served in time to get back to the next talk. It made me so happy to see her quietly beam as she found her best recipes to pass along to our daughters.

3. **Children give a parent the opportunity to create their own best friend.** Think about it. When you raise a child you basically have 20 years to teach him/her everything they need to know to stand on their own two feet, make good choices, and to become the kind of person YOU think they ought to be. You can train them to become godless criminals or God-fearing Christians. You can train them to value almost anything that is of value to you. Whatever you do with your children will be reflected back to you in their lives and in the lives of their posterity for generations to come. That

is true power! Talk about a rewarding endeavor. You have a child and you have an opportunity to influence the life of a person whose opinion you will value, whose company you will seek, whose love you will cherish for the rest of your life. What an honor to be able to pursue such a goal.

4. **Training a child changes the future.** When we take the time to befriend a child, to love a child, we influence the history of the world. Are we teaching them to care about community, about serving others, about providential living, about the importance of keeping sacred covenants with God? Are we teaching them to run from temptation, to stay safely within the arms of God's protecting influence by following the Holy Spirit? What kind of society do we build when we teach such things to our children? We can all imagine what kind of society is built by neglecting a child, beating a child, abusing a child, or shaming a child. We see examples of what that creates all around us. It takes vision to imagine the kind of world we can create by giving our children values, teaching them to love and to serve others, and to give of themselves with selfless abandon.

This is just a short list of four things. I am sure you can come up with many more reasons to value a child. If God who owns and personally governs the whole universe, sees enough in us, as weak as we are, to sacrifice His only perfect child to save the rest of us, then we must indeed have great value. To my mother, who wrote, set, and wound my moral clock and compass, I say thank you for seeing the value in me that I am only just now beginning to see in myself. More than anything, I want my children to know who my parents are. I want them to learn where their compass and bearings in life came from. I want them to value their progenitors as much as their progenitors value them.

What can you add to the list? How has raising a child enriched your life?

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For Mothers Everywhere