



ORIGINAL ARTICLE – 650 Words

Martyr Mom or Servant Model?

By Carla Anne Coroy

Do you know a martyr mom? She does her teens' laundry and makes their lunches. She cleans the house from top to bottom—all by herself. She stays up late, day in and day out, doing all of the unfinished work.

She's the mom who 'sacrificially' gives up a family outing—even though they were her kids' chores she stayed home to do. She recites her arm-length to-do list after telling you about how she agreed to help her kids with their various projects.

You likely know a martyr mom. But have you ever wondered if you might be one?

We started serving our families out of love. We loved them as we did their laundry. We served them as we packed lunches, cleaned bathrooms, drove carpools, and fixed bicycles . . . And then somewhere along the line, our serving morphed into martyrdom.

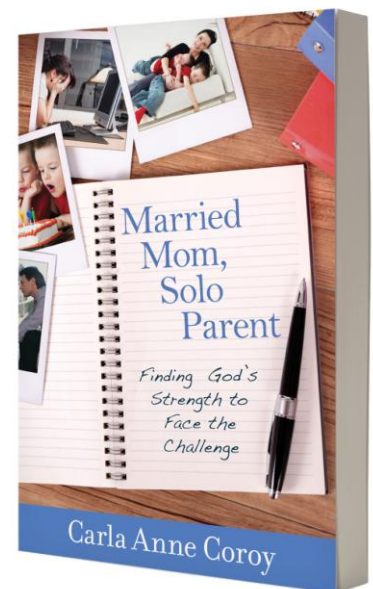
Is doing everything for everyone really loving? How can we protect ourselves from becoming martyr moms?

What would Jesus advise you to do? He taught his disciples to do what he was doing. He took them along wherever he went. He let them do some work. He sent them out to preach, heal, and cast out demons. Sometimes they did well, other times they came back wondering what went wrong. Jesus knew they needed plenty of room to try, and sometimes to fail. He didn't hover to make sure they did things perfectly and neither did he rush to fix things when their attempts went awry.

To be servant models, we need to imitate Jesus. We need to give our children the tools to work hard and develop responsibility. Let your children watch you work, then work with you, and eventually you can watch them work and succeed without you. Give them household chores and tasks so they can develop skills, recognize what they are capable of, and discover their contribution is valuable.

We need to teach our children to set boundaries. Let your children see you turn down requests to serve sometimes. Do you really need to volunteer on every committee? Healthy boundaries encourage your kids to experience the joy of serving and to choose best over good.

Serving our families requires us to teach our kids to do their best. If we expect their best and then accept what they do, we are setting them up to succeed and persevere. If your children do their best but it isn't as good as you would do it, leave it alone. Don't redo the job! If Jesus only accepted perfect work from his people, he wouldn't have chosen the rag-tag team of men he did. He expects our best, and then accepts it, even when our efforts fall short.



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Love sometimes says no. When we are exhausted and we do for our kids what they could do for themselves, we are teaching them they don't need to care about how they affect others. We are also saying that our poorest effort is better than their best. Occasionally saying no to our children also gives them permission to say no when a request butts up against their limits.

Serving also means looking around to see how you might bless someone. It means bringing a meal to a sick family, or clothes to the family who needs some, or giving Daddy a backrub. Teach your children to ask, "How could I serve someone today?" Give them the joy of serving others at home, and by volunteering at church or in the community.

Let's leave the Martyr Mom complex behind and be like Jesus—Servant Models.

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