

## Interactive lesson



*picture from MMMS collection*

Today is Mother's Day. Is everyone celebrating it?

A lot of animals are raising young recently born or hatched right now. Do you know who the *Guinness Book of World Records* named "The World's Most Prolific Mother"?

A lot of people talk about the number of children and grandchildren they have with pride. Is having lots of offspring a sign of a good mother?

How do you define a good mother?

Does every mother measure up to those qualities?

As with all jobs involving broad requirements (which motherhood certainly does), most people are better at some aspects of them than they are at others, and not everyone is cut out for the overall responsibility.

What characteristics of a good mother would you say God displays?

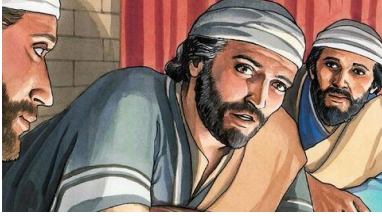
Not everyone was raised in a loving, nurturing home. For those who are not good mothers, what do you think God would have us do?

Let us pray now, for all mothers.

- For our mothers, who have given us life and love, that we may show them reverence and love, we pray to the Lord . . .
- For mothers who have lost a child through death, that their faith may give them hope, and their family and friends support and console them, we pray to the Lord . . .
- For women, though without children of their own, who like mothers have nurtured and care for us, we pray to the Lord . . .
- For mothers, who have been unable to be a source of strength, who have not responded to their children and have not sustained their families, we pray to the Lord . . .
- Loving God, as a mother gives life and nourishment to her children, so you watch over your church. Bless these women, that they may be strengthened as Christian mothers. Let the example of their faith and love shine forth.
- Grant that we, their sons and daughters, may honor them always with a spirit of profound respect. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Gospel lesson**

We continue from where we left off last week in Jesus's farewell discourse.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/qnpi-086-washing-feet/>

**John 14:15-21** NRSV

<sup>15</sup> "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

<sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.

<sup>17</sup> This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

<sup>18</sup> "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.

<sup>19</sup> In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.

<sup>20</sup> On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

<sup>21</sup> They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

*The word of God for the people of God*

<Hymn "Spirit of the Living God"

UMH #393

## Message: Always Be Ready



picture from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/a-living-hope/sixth-sunday-of-easter-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/sixth-sunday-of-easter-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Beloved Creator who gave us life  
and renewed it through Jesus,  
as we take time now to further consider today's  
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may joyfully share the news of Your  
incredible grace in both words and demonstrations of  
love with all whom we encounter. Amen.

As Easter people celebrating "A Living Hope,"  
we must "Always Be Ready":

"What are we supposed to be ready to do?  
Tell our story! It's as simple as that.  
And it's as complicated as that.

Peter says that we are always "ready to make your  
defense to anyone who demands from you  
an accounting for the hope that is in you."

But what does that mean, and who demands such an  
account these days?"

Have you ever asked a grandmother about her grandkids? Chances are, she has one or more recent pictures of them and stories about what they are up to. One prompt, and grandmother bragging is launched.

When I went to DC for my nephew's wedding, I made a point of uploading all the pictures from my camera and phone to my computer beforehand, so that I would have plenty of room for the pictures I planned on taking. I forgot to keep some pictures of our new grandbaby for showing off to everyone.



*pictures from MMMS collection*

I realized this on the drive down and texted my son and daughter-in-law for some new pictures. They are wonderful parents and did not fail me. I was delighted to show anyone who expressed interest just how adorable my granddaughter is, because I love her.

As Christians, we claim to love Jesus. How ready are we to launch into bragging about the beauty of our faith, how great God is, how awesome it is to have Jesus in our lives? What do you show or tell people who ask you about Sunday mornings?

People are hungry and thirsting for spiritual fulfillment. They always have - it is a human need like eating, sleeping, and breathing: we need to know

God. We see that in the lesson from Act today, when Paul was in Athens seeing all kinds of shrines.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/paul-athens/>

As the Jewish Saul, Paul had worshiped our one God through rituals and studying writings, but had missed some critical truths - most notably that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, until he was confronted about it on the road to Damascus. Paul was uniquely positioned to understand the misled searching for spiritual fulfillment that he encountered in his travels.

Having also learned that Jesus did not use military might to force people to do as God said, Paul sought common ground from which to convince the Gentiles about the love and fulfillment of Christ. He started talking about something they knew, the altar "to an unknown god," and used it to explain what was new to them, the story and promise of Jesus.

In this way, Paul helped them to understand and be able to choose to seek Christ instead of the false gods of the pantheon that were celebrated all over the city. People do not worship the ancient Greek and Roman gods today, but what do they worship in seeking spiritual fulfillment? <Let them respond if any do>

People seek money, prestige, power over others – even science and philosophy are venerated as providing all the answers. However, these are empty soul calories, leaving a person’s spirit less healthy the more they indulge in them, and leaving a person always pursuing more, like an addict’s next fix, often at the expense of others. We Christians have something better with which they can feed their souls and find fulfillment: we have Jesus!



*background picture on left  
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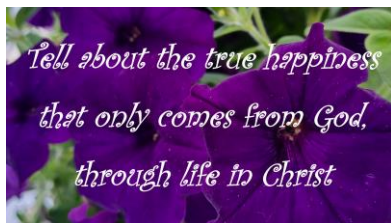
Now I am not expecting you as individuals to go stand on Wall Street in NYC and start exhorting the passing crowds to invest in Christ instead of in soulless corporations. Yet as the epistle of 1 Peter tells us, we should always be ready to explain about Jesus “to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you” - not with harsh, judgmental words or shouting, but “with gentleness and reverence.” We are to be models of Christ, for others to see and learn about God from.

If we love Jesus, we will keep His commandments. He told His disciples that. He told us the two greatest commandments are: to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind; and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Coming out of those, we see the great commission: to make disciples of all nations - for if we truly love God and love our neighbors, we want for our neighbors to know the true source of life and fulfillment, to experience the joy and peace of life in Christ's love, to be part of the family of God with us.

When is the best time to tell them? **I don't know!**

So we must always be ready to jump on opportunities that come up, that through relationships of love and sharing everyone can learn the most important truth of their lives: that God loves them deeply and provides the spiritual nourishment they crave.



*picture from MMMS collection*

When I was about half as old as I am now, I greeted everyone with a "Happy [whatever day it was]." A coworker asked me why I was so happy all the time. After I confirmed he was not just looking for a flippant answer ("Do you really want to know?"), I told him, "Because I love God and I know that God loves me, through Jesus."

I do not think this coworker from India immediately converted to Christianity, but from his response, I understood that he believed I was telling the truth and he was seeking something fulfilling for his life.



We have already talked about characteristics of good mothers, and how God cares for us as a great mother would. God takes care of our needs and nurtures us, that we can learn and grow as happy, healthy children of God. Through Jesus, we can be in a loving relationship with God that brings us joy.

As Christians, let us always be ready to brag about our beloved Savior, telling about the joy life in Jesus brings us. Let yourself bubble over with the happy blessings you see because of the Holy Spirit moving in your life, and share God's Good News with everyone that gives you an opening.