

## Hyun Jin Moon's Family Peace Association - A Mother Is God's Gift

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"A mother is a person who, seeing there are only four pieces of pie for five people, promptly announces she never did care for pie." - Tenneva Jordan

This Mother's Day is the first time I get to celebrate as a mother myself with my own mom. I'm planning on treating my mom out to dinner. It's better than a macaroni necklace but in truth, after the last year, it feels like a celebration that falls terribly short of what this amazing woman really deserves.

No matter how much you hear from others about being a parent, it can never compare to experiencing it.



I will never be the person I was before becoming a mom. It changes you physically, mentally, spiritually, and even on a chemical level. The gift God gives through a child is not just the baby herself; The whole process is an experience to come closer to Him, to learn more about yourself and your partner, and your entire extended family and friends.

I think it's wonderful that many women can enjoy their pregnancies. But at the risk of sounding dramatic, there were two times in the last year when I had the genuine thought that I was not going to be alive the next day. I had hyperemesis gravidarum most of my pregnancy. If you're wondering what that is, imagine food poisoning that lasts for months. You, like me, might have heard about morning sickness. This was not morning sickness. I was talking with nurses and my doctor from week 5 of pregnancy to try anything that would help. My husband was making runs to the store after work to try all the over-the-counter remedies that might bring relief. I couldn't keep anything down. I remember being so proud that I kept a single saltine cracker down the entire day. I

was living on ice cubes for a week because even the smell of all my once-favorite foods would send me running to the bathroom. I asked my husband to change deodorants, change our laundry detergent; everything was making me sick.

I only had enough energy to drag myself between the bed and the bathroom.

The only thing I wanted to do was sleep because it meant I wasn't throwing up. One night during that horrifying time, my husband held me as I went through what we later determined was a panic attack.

My doctor ended up asking me to come in and they put me on an I.V. to get me rehydrated. My mom held my hand as they inserted the needle. I was so cold. My mom stayed there as the saline bag drained into me. All I could do was lie there.



The only thing that finally helped was a drug used for nausea in chemotherapy patients. Even then, it didn't completely stop it. Instead of being sick all day, I only got sick once or twice a day.

The experience was terrifying and crippling.

I could tell you about the other challenges, like getting GERD so severe that I had esophageal spasms that sent me to the ER. Or the complications I had with the epidural during labor and delivery that led to a spinal headache. I was bedridden for a week straight after delivery because being upright for longer than 2 minutes would give me a splitting headache. I had to nurse my daughter lying down in bed, and pump on a strict and frequent schedule so that others could also feed her. I was diagnosed with postpartum depression at my daughter's two-week appointment and tested positive for COVID-19 a week after that. Like any new parent, I didn't sleep for longer than two hours at a time to keep up with feeding my newborn. I found out many months later, after wondering why I had a sore throat that never went away, that I developed a tonsil infection.

I'm not sharing these things to scare people or to complain. Throughout the pregnancy, I never begrudged the life growing inside me and was grateful to even have the chance to carry life into the world. I'm sharing my experience because becoming a parent is intense - a massive understatement - but always worth it.

I would never want any young mom (or dad) to feel alone in the challenges or joys encountered along the way of parenthood.

I know I wasn't alone and that's how I was able to find the light at the end of the tunnel. I had amazing mother figures to help me along the way. My own mom was and continues to be my hero. But I also had sisters from coast to coast and even abroad to listen, comfort, and advise. No matter the time of day, because I had those contacts even in different time zones, I was able to contact someone literally anytime. I hope they're reading this now and know who they are. You meant so much during the most challenging times.

No one is meant to go through parenthood alone. I've learned so much about God's heart and realized through pregnancy, and now motherhood, that He gave us each other - family members, friends, medical professionals - to lean on and uplift. The scale won't always be balanced. Sometimes we need more help than we feel like we can reciprocate, and that's okay.

I have the best mentor and model: my mom, whom I now get to refer to more often as Grandma around my daughter. Thank you for giving away your piece of the pie more times than I can remember.

I opted to receive professional therapy for my postpartum depression, and it was one of the best decisions I made. I resisted initially because I thought of the stigma against it. But I think if we choose to ask for help more often, we will realize that there are so many people who want to help and that it is a humble and strengthening process. It does not make you weak. It is an investment in making you a better person - more patient and compassionate, the kind of person who can better help others because you are better equipped mentally and emotionally. I feel better equipped to love and care for my daughter after taking care of my mental health.

My parenthood journey has been a rocky one so far. I'm not perfect, but I'm confident that I am doing my best.

To all you mothers out there, Happy Mother's Day, today and every day.

*"Mothers hold their children's hands for a short while, but their hearts forever."*