

Margaret's Story

I want to tell you about a woman named Margaret. Most likely you've never heard of her. She is not a champion of women's rights, a glamorous actress, or a recording artist. She isn't a successful businesswoman or politician. She's never authored a book or traveled the lecture circuit. She hasn't won any humanitarian awards or received academic honors. In fact, she never even went to college.

Margaret is simply a faithful wife and mother.

She has been married to her husband for almost sixty years. Together they raised five children—all of whom have families of their own now. Homemaking has been her sole career, and she poured her life into this calling.

A typical day for Margaret began before dawn. She fixed her husband's breakfast and packed his lunch for work. Then she woke her children and got them ready for school. The following hours were spent tackling an endless list of chores: laundry, ironing, mending, dusting the furniture, vacuuming the carpets, scrubbing the floors, cleaning the bathrooms, grocery shopping, errands, and cooking. By 5:30 P.M. she had dinner prepared for her family. Afterwards there were dishes to wash, household tasks to complete, baths for the little ones, homework help for the older ones, and nighttime stories to read. When she finally crawled into bed, only a precious few hours were afforded for sleep. Then it was time to start the routine all over again. In this manner, Margaret tirelessly served her family—day after day, month after month, and year after year.

Now if you had the honor of meeting Margaret, you would at once be impressed by her joy. But her vivacious, delightful character is most conspicuous in the arena of her home. She's always smiling or singing. She is excited by the simplest of pleasures. She loves to laugh—so hard the tears run down her cheeks. And all through the years she marshaled this joyful energy for the well-being of her family. Never once did her children hear her complain. And not until they had children of their own did they comprehend the sacrifices she had made, for all her sacrifices had been masked by her perpetual joy.

Margaret's constant presence in the home provided comfort and security. Her children awoke each morning to the sound of her cheerful voice and returned home every afternoon to her warm greeting. She was always available—to hear about their days, call out study questions for a test, make them a snack, or bandage scraped knees. At no time was her family an interruption. She would drop whatever she was doing to tend to their most pressing concerns—without any mention of inconvenience. And if something was important or exciting to her husband or children, then it was of great interest to Margaret. Her life was intertwined with theirs. If they were happy, so was she. If they were suffering, so was she. No trial or joy was so small or insignificant as to escape her notice. Margaret's "being there"—not just physically but with all her heart—left an indelible imprint upon the members of her family.

Her lifelong service to her husband and children speaks most eloquently about her love for the Savior. God's love captured her heart as a teenager, and at the age of twenty-three she married a godly man. Together they imparted their love for God to their

children. They modeled righteous character and genuine faith in the home. And they expressed that faith by commitment to their local church, a church they helped found almost fifty years ago. As Margaret's children will tell you—whenever the church doors were open, their entire family was present.

Margaret's gift of hospitality was an integral part of daily life in the church. Many a family enjoyed Sunday dinner at her home. As the hostess for numerous women's meetings at her house, she always prepared a vast array of refreshments. If a missionary family, guest speaker, or any visitor came into town, it was taken for granted that Margaret would host them. On one occasion, she even housed a choir! She would clean her small house, cook hearty meals, suggest outings for her guests, and even do their laundry. Along with her servanthood, her joyful demeanor made everyone feel at ease. So you can imagine why anyone visiting Margaret's home was eager to return again—and soon.

She freely extended hospitality in spite of her limited resources. Her husband was a construction worker, and though he eventually became a superintendent, Margaret had to manage the entire household with a mere forty dollars per week. But their financial situation did not deter her from giving. She would consistently set aside a portion of her weekly allowance and slip a small gift to someone facing hard times. For whether financial or practical, Margaret was always tuned in to the needs of others. If someone in the church was ill, in the hospital, or maybe just lonely, Margaret would visit the person. When a baby was born or a family member died, there was Margaret with a meal. For years she and her husband drove a disabled woman to and from the Sunday evening service.

Her charity did not end when she reached retirement age. In her late seventies she cared for a ninety-year-old widow by taking her to the doctor, the grocery store, or the hairdresser each week. Margaret was never enamored by popular or influential people. Rather, her heart was drawn like a magnet to anyone who was outcast, poor, or needy.

Those who lived near Margaret were also the recipients of her good deeds. She called her neighborhood "my little mission field." Whenever a new family moved in, Margaret would take them a meal. She and her husband frequently appeared on their neighbors' doorsteps with fresh-picked produce or homemade baked goods. Margaret also extended friendship to the women who lived around her. She supported and encouraged one young mom through seventeen years of mothering. Now this woman counts Margaret as dear as her own mother. And Margaret's like a grandma to all the neighborhood kids who loved to come to her house. She would listen to their tales, read them stories, and of course fix them a snack.

One young boy in particular loved to hang out at Margaret's house. He followed her around, talking to her while she cleaned. He stopped by early each morning when he walked his dog. He showed up at her door if he missed his bus and needed a ride to school. He even built a tree house on Margaret's property and would try to coax her to "come on up." So why, you might ask, would an active boy spend so much time with an elderly woman? Well, this child's mother was in prison, his father had deserted him, and he lived with his grandparents, who now had a second family to raise. Margaret's home

was a place of refuge. No doubt her pleasant company and interest in his daily life provided much happiness and comfort for this lonely little boy.

But recently everything about Margaret's life has changed. Her husband suffered a stroke. She's eighty years old and unable to care for him on her own. So she's had to move—far from her home, her church, and her neighborhood—and take her husband to live with their daughter. Her days are now occupied with caring for this man she vowed to love—in sickness and in health—all the days of her life. She feeds him, bathes him, and reads to him from the Bible. Though she did not anticipate this abrupt turn of events, and despite the new and varied challenges before her, Margaret continues to serve faithfully.

But then serving has been a way of life for Margaret, and it's her servant's heart that has profoundly affected all who know her. While the orbit of her life was never very wide, to her husband, five children, and seventeen grandchildren, she means the world. Though she's lived in almost complete anonymity, her neighbors, young and old alike, will never forget her. She may not be extraordinarily gifted, but Margaret's fellow church members are eternally grateful for her sacrificial care.

Margaret has served without fanfare, never seeking attention or accolades. But one day soon, she will meet her Maker. On that day she will receive her "commendation from God." Although it's true, by worldly standards, that Margaret never accomplished anything great, in God's eyes, she has achieved true greatness. Her life can be summed up by the words of our Lord: "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant...even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:26, 28).

Margaret is my example of a Titus 2 woman. Margaret is also my mom. And it's to you, Mom, that I lovingly dedicate this book.

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