

Eleanor Davis, born Eleanor Anne Spiller, was a devout catholic and loving mother. Moreover, she was a teacher, who dedicated countless hours trying to help others learn. She loved to teach reading. It is suiting that we might share this occasion to be inspired by my mother's life and possibly learn something for our own. Though there are many lessons we might possibly learn from my mother's life, there is one that stands out most to me.

In the Old Testament, Samuel, a leader of ancient Israel and first of the major prophets, must select a new king with the help of God. Samuel is surprised by God's choice – which corresponded to neither appearance nor stature, but rather, as noted in **1 Samuel 16.7**:

...the Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

There are few quotes that could summarize the underlying lesson from my mother's life as succinctly.

In the 1960s and 70s, at first glance, my mother might have been chalked up as a ditzy brunette with no more in mind than getting her M R S. Nothing could have been further from the truth. In an age before most of mankind had any contact with or understanding of computers outside of science fiction, she trained computer programmers and data entry specialists for the IRS. However, and more importantly to my mother, she was always deeply spiritual and involved in supporting others in their faith. At the time, she was also involved in instructing others in the Catholic faith and even led a deaf choir.

My mother's deep spirituality, abilities, and achievements might have come as a surprise to some. Perhaps, the starkest contrast to such impressions was her deep spirituality, which grew after she lost her father at an early age. Having lost her father quite traumatically, she found solace in the teachings of the Catholic Church and always dreamt of being a martyr for Jesus. She was selfless and always strove to help others. She worked as a public school educator for twenty-one years, dedicating countless hours to her students. At the time she also dedicated many hours to teaching CCD, RCIA, and taking part in other service projects.

My mother's "looking at the heart" rather than outward appearance was also evident in her choice of a husband. In a day and age, when Ron's familial baggage and extensive tattoos made him a pariah from polite company, my mother saw a man whose heart was as big as her daddy's. And here is where we can be inspired by my mother's life. She was right. He was big hearted. Despite a gruff exterior, she'd found a husband who would love her until the end of her days and do everything for her and her children. This tattooed, beer drinking man loved her and her children, always going the extra mile, as my mother would, to take the children to baseball, scouts, and a large number of extra-curricular activities.

As a teacher, she had faith in some of the hardest to reach students. This faith in the difficult kids was also apparent in the relationship to her biological children. She had a son who didn't look quite right. His head was too big and his mannerisms off. His teachers thought he might be a little special (and not in the good way). However, my mother was convinced that little boy would

become a professor. She was right. The weird little boy with the big head became a published educational researcher. Her faith in me meant all the world.

Certainly, it's fair to say that sometimes my mother put too much faith in her fellow man. Though, who are we to judge? More importantly, and a lesson I believe that my mother, my mother, would like us to take from her life, is that we should have faith in others, that we should be loving where others aren't, and that it is worthwhile, that it does make all the difference to help and support others even if it's not always easy to do so.

Please take solace and find inspiration in the words of the Beatitudes, from the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.