



'you're not  
my mother!'

A grace-filled response to these four dreaded words can draw you and your adopted child closer together

BY SANDY LIPSKY

### "YOU'RE NOT MY MOTHER!"

From the moment I brought home my infant daughter, I dreaded the day I would hear this statement. Eight years later, those angry words finally spewed forth from her mouth.

I don't even remember why she was upset, but I do remember that her comment haunted me and filled me with self-doubt. At some point, your adopted child—that precious person you've loved unconditionally—will likely direct these words at you. But instead of freezing or getting into a heated argument, let your grace-filled response serve as an opportunity to create a stronger bond.

### Affirm your role

Lovingly and kindly remind your child that you are, in fact, his or her parent. Swallow the shock of the moment, take a deep breath, and say, "Yes, sweetie, I *am* your mom." Such simple words. Such true words.

We should not be taking our children's pronouncements personally. We need to recognize the declaration for what it actually is: a disguised cry that says, *Who do I belong to?* And in all honesty, you can say with confidence, "I am your parent—and you are my child."

### Reaffirm your role

When conflicts arise, reaffirm your role by simply saying, "*As your mom* [or *As your dad*], it's my job to make sure you're protected/guided/cared for/safe."

Just as we need reminders that God is our Father and He seeks our best, our children need to know the same thing about us. We shouldn't wait until drama appears to reaffirm the safety and security that we provide for them.

### Offer continual words of love

Even when we don't think our kids hear us, speaking words of affirmation and affection will eventually sink in. Our children need to hear us tell them over and over, "You are mine. You are safe. You are loved." When we say, "I'm so glad you're part of this family; we wouldn't be complete without you," we express a beautiful truth. The message is, *You are somebody, and you belong to me.*

I knew that I'd been able to get this message across when, years after that first angry outburst, I read a Facebook post my daughter wrote about me: "For anyone who's had the opportunity to meet my mother, you know how full of joy, adventure, laughter, humility and love she is. I am incredibly lucky to get to call this wonderful woman 'Mom.'" ●

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