

Sharon Ford Funeral Remarks

By her youngest son Cameron Ford on July 2, 2022

Before I begin my remarks, I want to thank my angel sister for all of the sacrifices she has made over the last several years in taking care of our parents, especially this last year with our mom. Even with what help others tried to provide, her load has been enormous, and at times almost crushed her. But she pushed forward and endured. I like to think that the signature characteristics of the Hal and Sharon Ford family are that we are extremely loyal, that we are very reliable, and that we love deeply. My sister is all of those things, and more. I love her and want to thank her for the example she has always been to me.

It is a privilege to be the son of Sharon Ford. I am so grateful that she has finally found relief from the terrible disease of Alzheimer's. Happily, she still had a glimmer of her personality right up to the end.

My goal today is to help you see my mom through my eyes, to see the strong, unique, and wonderful woman that she was and is. In my remarks at dad's funeral last year, I read a journal entry that I made just before my mission when I was twenty years old, where I said that my mother would say that "I had got religion". In a portion of that it said:

"From this you could deduce that my mother does not believe in the church. You would be right. My mother is very skeptical of everything, but in a way this makes her very open to all kinds of ideas. I think that if you could read my mind that you would see her influence very strongly. She is a very deep person, but it is almost impossible to break through her exterior to discover this fact. ... I want her to know that she is the biggest single influence on my way of thinking..."

Today as we celebrate her life, I want to outline a few of the ways that she shaped my way of thinking and behaving.

1. In many ways I inherited my mom's skepticism, or not just accepting things as true because they are said to be true. This has often saved me from being taken in by sales people, hearsay, and especially when it comes to religion. I was extremely skeptical of the church in my teenage years, and that was in large part due to the influence of my mother. I had to dig and dig for myself, looking at both the good and the ugly, before I decided it must be true. In the 30+ years since I started studying it, I have never stopped digging, and the more I dig, the more I become convinced of its truth.
2. My mom was extremely frugal. While they wintered in St. George, she and dad would keep extra sugar packets from McDonalds rather than just going to the store and buying a box of sugar. As a boy, I learned quickly that I wasn't going to get any of the candy bars near the checkout register, and getting anything out of the penny candy machines was extremely rare. The ones costing a quarter were completely out of the question. From these lessons I eventually learned that I wasn't going to get everything I wanted, and that I need to be happy with what I have.
3. I learned honesty and integrity from my mom. She was a woman of extreme integrity. My dad once said that she was one of the most honest people that he knew. At times her bluntness could sting, but she always said what she believed. There were several times during her career as an accountant that she flat out refused to comply with the accounting directions given to her by her employers because she felt what they were asking her to do was dishonest. As a boy I got in the habit of stealing candy bars when I had the opportunity (probably because she hardly ever bought me one). One time when I stole from a local pharmacy, she made me pay for the candy, and then go work for the pharmacy for free for a week.
4. My mom was a woman who definitely had a backbone. She would stand up for herself whenever she felt it was needed. I learned to stand up for myself from her. I have also found myself drawn to strong women who have a fighting spirit, like my mom.

5. I learned devotion and generosity to family from my mom. Despite her frugality, she was always willing to help financially when she felt it was needed. After the first year of college tuition, my parents made me understand that the rest was my responsibility. I am so grateful that they did. My grades improved drastically after I started having to pay for everything myself. But even after telling me it was now on my dime, they still offered to help at times when I got in a jam. Mom was the one to suggest helping pay for Ariel's tutoring in elementary school when we learned that she had a mild form of dyslexia. She was also the one that instigated helping to pay for all three of our kid's missions.

6. I learned to value and defend uniqueness from my mom; that everyone should have the freedom to view things how they choose. When I was in elementary school, it became apparent to my mom that I saw things differently than the other kids. Teachers would mark my answers to test questions as wrong because I didn't give the answer they were looking for. However, my mom noticed that my answers made sense if you looked at the questions from a different angle, and she insisted that the teachers not try to change me from my different way of viewing the world. Since I'm fairly stubborn, I'm not sure they could have changed that about me, but even so, her becoming my champion and cheerleader has given me a love for people who view things through a lens that is slightly shifted from the way everyone else around them sees things.

7. My habit of debating issues to better understand how I feel about them comes directly from my mom. Mom was a bit of a contrarian. She would consciously or unconsciously take the side opposite from everyone else in the room. In truth, I think she just enjoyed stirring the pot to see what came to the top. I've many times found myself doing the same thing, much to the chagrin of my wife. I rarely found myself in agreement with the opinions of my mom. But because of that, I learned to have a

thick skin, and that I could disagree with a person, and still love them deeply and treat them with respect. Our current society could benefit greatly from this lesson taught to me by my mom.

These seven things are just a few of the thousands of ways that my mom shaped my life.

Finally, I want to talk about my mom's complicated love/hate relationship with men. She always felt herself drawn to men. In her opinion, they were always doing and talking about more interesting things than the women. Even in the worst of her dementia when she didn't recognize anyone, she was always much more cooperative with men than she was with women. But she was also somewhat of a feminist that often found herself angry and frustrated with men. She was devoted to dad, but I lost count of the number of times she called him a male chauvinistic pig during my youth. Most of the reasons she gave for not liking the church, like its history of plural marriage, or women not holding the priesthood, came from her belief that men were taking advantage of, or unfairly treating, women.

In general, I agree with her assessment of men. When men give in to the worst of their selfish natural man tendencies, because of their greater physical strength, they can represent the very worst and most evil, brutal aspects that mankind has to offer. But on the flip side, when they give in to their better nature, and the enticing's of the Holy Spirit, they can also rank among the very best. After reflecting on the character of those around him that were active in the church, my dad would often say that the one thing he knew about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was that "it sure produced a lot of really good people", and my mom would agree with him. So, I think she often found herself conflicted about her feelings towards the church. But ultimately, I believe that her biggest issue with men, God, religion, and the church was her very unhappy relationship with her father.

My grandpa Patton came from a generation that believed strongly in physical punishment as a way to control their children. But due to his own genetics and personality, he had also produced some very stubborn children that didn't like to be controlled. This made for a very bad combination, especially with my mother (although I believe my uncle Nephi, being a boy, got it much worse than my mom ever did). Mom adored her mother, but never had good things to say about her dad. In almost every conversation that involved him, she would bring up how he used to hit her on the top of the head until she almost passed out when she would defy him, and then she would say: "But I wasn't about to let that son-of-a-bitch win by backing down". I don't think she has ever forgiven him for the abuse of her childhood, and I believe she unconsciously associated God and the church with her dad. Since the church was important to her dad, and she despised her dad, then the church wasn't going to be important to her, especially when she found what she saw as other evidences of men in the church taking advantage of women. Also, it is somewhat natural to view our Heavenly Father in the same light that we view our earthly father. If our earthly father is hurtful, then we may unconsciously view our Heavenly Father as vengeful and hurtful and desire to distance ourselves from him. All of this makes me so grateful that our family had a dad that was not abusive, but was firm, patient, and very loving in a way that I believe eventually helped all of us to accept our loving Heavenly Father when He called to us.

In dad's funeral last year, I stated that, "The God that I have come to know over the last 30 years is a devoted and loving Heavenly Father that wants to give His children every possible opportunity to receive as much as they are willing to receive". I also related a promise that Heavenly Father made to me when I was in the Bountiful Temple that He would eventually help my parents come to know and trust in Him and in His Son. For my mom, I believe this will not happen until she fully reconciles with her dad, and I believe that our dad, as always, is patiently

(or at least somewhat patiently) waiting for mom. Now that she has crossed the veil into the spirit world, I pray that she will finally take her dad into her arms and forgive him so that she and dad can move on.

In closing, I want to once again testify of the knowledge that I have been given... not belief, but knowledge. I know that God is real, and that His Son Jesus Christ is the great Creator and redeemer of all things. As Mark Twain once said: "Truth is stranger than fiction", and that certainly applies to these truths that I have come to know. It may sound strange, but in the greatest act of love the world has ever known, the creator of the universe was born into the world as the babe of Bethlehem, willingly suffered unfathomable agony in the Garden, and gave His life on the cross to atone for the sins of the world, so that through Him we can all find peace, forgiveness, and eventually become more like Him. Through Him we will all one day rise again in the day of resurrection. At that day, all who have come to truly know Him will gladly kneel before him and bathe his feet with their loving tears. He appeared to the boy Joseph in 1820, and through Joseph, later restored His church to the earth once again. He is the truth, the way, and the life. He deserves our love, our devotion, and our loyalty.

I know this all to be true, and because of this, I know we will see mom again.

We love you mom.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.