



The Ministry of My Grandmother's Hands

By Mary Mercer

I recall looking at my grandmother's aged hands and thinking about all the tasks those hands had performed over the many decades of her long life.

At the time, grandma had passed her 90th birthday and had recently suffered a significant stroke. Her hands had become relatively idle, probably for the first time in her life. The skin on her wrinkled, tan hands was supple and baby-soft, her fingers slightly bent from arthritis, her nails clipped but not filed. The thought occurred to me that though her hands were idle now, those hands had performed countless loving and helpful tasks in the past.

This led me to think about the skills and contributions of a woman's hands in general. Over a woman's lifetime, her hands are very likely to:

- Wash dishes
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Prod the bashful
- Scrub floors
- Change diapers
- Plant and cultivate gardens
- Type reports
- Peel vegetables
- Wipe away tears

Do the laundry
Pat shoulders
Write letters
Wipe off dust
Fluff pillows
Play a musical instrument
Make phone calls
Shake rugs
Balance a checkbook
Drive a vehicle
Turn pages in a book for a child
Fold hands in prayer
Smooth unruly hair
Arrange flowers
Knead bread
Pull a tooth
Wash a window
Manage a spreadsheet
Take a photo
Teach truth
Make a pie
Straighten a chair
Protect from danger
Make a ponytail
Hammer a nail
Paint a wall
Change a lightbulb
Assemble a meal
Extract a splinter
Snuggle a puppy
Fashion a garment
Hold a hand
Water a lawn
Paint a picture
Clean a closet
Hem a sleeve
Push a stroller or wheelchair
Feel a forehead for fever
Change a bed
Pack a picnic
Sweep floor
Lock a door
Share a recipe
Patch a hole

Rub a back
Write a note
Tie a shoe
Blow a kiss
Wrap a gift
Set the table
Frame a picture
Hand out drinking water
Assist the feeble
Fold clothes
Pick fruit
Cut hair
Trim fingernails
Feed an invalid
Apply a bandage
Wipe a runny nose
Pull a wagon
Tie a ribbon

A woman's hands—strong, gentle, caring, beautiful.

Mary Mercer and her husband, Tim, served as missionaries in Korea for 25 years. Mary lives in Bourbonnais, Illinois, attends College Church University Avenue, and belongs to a writer's group.