



TLC FOR moms

30 DAILY DEVOTIONS

Introduction

There's no way around it. The life of a mom is busy, whether you have infants, toddlers, school kids, or teens. But it's also a season when you need a lot of encouragement and wisdom, especially from other moms. This devotional is for you. The daily readings are short and they written by a wide variety of moms from Twin Lakes Church, with a wide variety of life experiences. Some are new moms, some have grandkids. Our hope is that when you read each one, you will find perspective, encouragement, and most importantly, the love of God for you.



You're Not "Just a Mom"

"Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function..."

Romans 12:4

After working in full-time ministry for many years, I decided to stay home when we were ready to start a family. Suddenly, I experienced a strange identity crisis...one that I didn't see coming. I truly believed that being a mom was a *VERY* important job; after all, it would be a huge privilege to take part in raising up--and training--a child to move towards maturity: emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. However, after having our first son Dylan, when people asked me what I did (for a living), I found myself replying: "I'm just a stay-at-home mom." "I'm just..." was the phrase that caught me off guard; why did I feel the need to downplay my role as a mom?

The reality is, as followers of Jesus, all of us are called to different roles within God's body/family! For some, that will mean using our gifts to run a business, or serve in ministry, or cut hair, or be a doctor, or a teacher, or (you fill in the blank). For others that will mean employing your gifts as you stay at home with kids. And for many of us, it will mean a combination of several different roles over the various seasons of life.

But, the important thing to remember is this: God has called each one of us to our specific role(s), and each role is precious, vital and has kingdom-importance! In other words, there is no "I'm just..." in God's eyes!

So, mom...yes, you! You are not "just a mom"; your role is special! Take heart--*what you are doing matters and has eternal significance.*

Sara Bentley

It's a Season

"For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven."

Ecclesiastes 3:1

It was Sunday morning and it wasn't going well. My husband was a new pastor at Twin Lakes Church, so he left home early and it was my job to get our 3 year old son and 18 month old daughter up, fed, dressed and delivered to Sunday school. It was one of those mornings, when every task is a struggle and the kids just didn't want to cooperate.

So I was running late as I screeched into the parking lot at church. I yanked the kids out of the car and was rushing to Sunday School, my daughter bouncing on my hip, my son being pulled along by the hand. I must have looked a sight—slapped on make-up, hair going every which way, a wild look in my eyes, frustration oozing from my pores.

Suddenly there was a hand on my shoulder. I turned to see who it was. . . and my heart sank.

It was the former pastor's wife. She was a legend. Elegant, godly, wise, raised four wonderful children. Her husband pastored the church for nearly 50 years. What must she think of me in my harried state?

But she smiled. And in her kind eyes there was empathy.

"Laurie", she said with a little laugh, "Remember—-it's a season. It's just a season. And it will be gone before you know it. Enjoy it." She looked wistfully at my little ones and went on her way.

I have gotten a lot of motherhood advice over the years, but that little phrase on that crazy Sunday morning really stuck. *It's a season.* Relax. Enjoy it. They'll never be 3 and 18 months again.

I realize now with hindsight: that particular season of my motherhood was the most intense. . . and the shortest, although it didn't feel short at the time! Whatever phase of motherhood you are in, remember to be in the moment and enjoy little fingers & toes, sticky kisses, science projects, awkward middle school changes, teenage transitions. It's a season—and it only happens once.

Laurie Schlaepfer

God's Compassion for You

"The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin..."

Exodus 34:6-7

This is a very special passage. There are lots of descriptions of God in the Bible, but in these verses, God is actually describing himself. And I think it's wonderful that the first word God uses is intimately connected to motherhood—the word *compassionate*.

In Hebrew, the word for *compassionate* is *rakhum*. The word for *womb* is *rekhem*. The similarity between these words invites us to imagine that God's compassion is like a mother's tender feeling for her vulnerable infant (see Isaiah 49:13-15 where this comparison is made directly).

When I hear my little 3-month-old son cry, something deep within me is moved to respond. My fierce compassion drives me to come to his aid, over and over and over again. God wants us to know that his love for us, his compassion for us, is like a mother responding to the cries of her precious, helpless baby. He always hears our cries and his deep compassion for us compels him to respond.

When you next feel like crying out for help, I encourage you to imagine God rushing to you with the compassion of a mother, scooping you up in his arms, and telling you everything is going to be alright. His assurance carries weight because he is our all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving Savior. You can rest secure in him because he can and will take care of you.

Elisabeth Kantorik

Time to Take a Break

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:28 NIV

I sagged my full weight against the dining room wall and slid to the floor in a dramatic display of frustration. Defeated by my seven-year-old son! My husband followed, extending a hand to help me to my feet. “Are you going to let that little pipsqueak steal your power?” He tried to hide the smile that curled his lips, but he didn’t succeed. He broke out laughing. I did too. Suddenly the entire episode seemed absurd. I got up, brushed off my wounded ego, and started again.

That scene occurred over fifty years ago but I remember it as though it happened yesterday. My child was just being a kid in a cranky mood who wanted his way when he wanted it. What else is new? But I had given up because I was tired, overworked, and stressed. Parenting in that moment felt like the biggest challenge of my life.

The scripture verse above reminds us that the Lord wants us to take a break. Come to Him and he will give us rest. It might take some creative planning, but getting regular breaks, even short ones, will renew you and make you a better mom.

My children are grown now, but they have children of their own and I spend a lot of time with them. Even grandparenting can be taxing! So I have to communicate a loving boundary when asked to take on more than I’m able. I actually do something wonderful for myself such as taking a walk or spending a little time in my prayer garden where I sit and read or journal while enjoying the blooming roses. After spending some of my time in these pleasing ways, I have plenty of renewed energy for my loved ones.

Karen O’Connor

God's Grace for You

"Greetings, you who are highly Favored, ..."

Luke 1:28

As a new mom, then a single-mom, follow by a blended-family mom, and now a Grand-mom, I've found my grounding in studying the hardships and qualities of moms in scripture, particularly Jesus' mom, Mary. What did Mary have that qualified her to mother God's son, and how did she do it with such courage? Over the next three days, I'll share three blessings that Mary had that allowed Mary to serve and love God and her family well.

First, Mary had God's favor. Out of the goodness of God, she was chosen to bear and raise not only a king, but God's Son. It was a calling that seemed impossible to her at first, especially since she was as human as you and I. Mary hadn't earned the title of Jesus' mom by superhuman powers and godliness. Like you and I, Mary wasn't full of grace, she needed grace to do what God had called her to do!

Did you know that you possess the same favor, the same grace, that God gave Mary? Ephesians 1 teaches that in Jesus, you have been chosen, have been given a special blessing, and have been adopted in to God's beloved family. Because of God's charitable favor you have all you need to be the best mom you can be!

Ask yourself, "Do I love my children because they've earned it? Or do I love them because they are my *family*?" Let your answer speak to the inadequacies you might feel in tough times, and recognize that the love and grace you have for your own children is multiplied as God shows his love and grace to you.

Kim Breuninger

Trust God's Word

"The Lord is with you...Nothing is impossible with God."

Luke 1:28,37

Mary trusted God's word, and believed his promises, but could I?

I'd never expected to become a single mom, yet there I was, rejected and feeling very alone. How could God allow this? Where was he?? Surely Mary wanted to ask these questions later in her life as her son was beaten and hung on a cross. The Lord had promised to be with her, that nothing was impossible. Wasn't this a good time for God to show up? Wasn't this an impossible situation?!

"Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished." (Luke 1:45) Mary's cousin Elizabeth spoke these words to her, and in them we see the wisdom in Mary's choice to trust God. Mary knew that in the face of unexpected circumstances, she had a choice to accept that God had a much bigger purpose and he would be with her through it.

Isn't this where our peace lies—in the promises of God? When have you struggled to believe that God will accomplish his will in your undesired circumstances? How did it turn out for you? Write out all the good things God has done in the midst of your trying circumstance to remind yourself of His faithfulness.

Kim Breuninger

A Servants Heart

"I am the Lord's servant; may it happen as you have said..."

Luke 1:38

The third quality of Jesus' mother was the heart of a willing servant.

Moms know that there is nothing glamorous about mothering; it's humbling, exhausting, and messy! For Mary, the honor of giving birth to the savior of her people was also a very personal and cultural dilemma. Yet Mary willingly accepted the job, without hesitation! Her ready, willing heart wasn't just good timing, it reflects devotion.

Moms, devotion to our children is a beautiful thing, but devotion to them alone will wear you down. Our spirits need fuel. We need inspiration, forgiveness, understanding, comfort and strength. Mary knew that. She began with God's word, and trusted Him to provide the rest as her needs arose. Her heart was one that was open to RECEIVE the love of God.

How have you received from God lately? Have you sat still long enough to hear his voice and give you guidance? Have you received his forgiveness? His grace? Open your heart to him today!

Kim Breuninger

God's Got This

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints and his incomparably great power for us who believe."

Ephesians 1:17-19

These verses are underlined, circled, and highlighted in my Bible... in several Bibles actually! They were my foundation verses to pray for our children. In the early years it was just my hope and prayer that they would know and love Jesus as they grew up.

As they began to grow and the stakes seemed higher, I clung to these verses. They saw me through the times when I was certain I didn't have the ability to parent one of them through a situation or life stage. They encouraged me that it's the Lord that gives wisdom and hope. HE has the power to work all situations for good. He would be there for me and for my child when it seemed impossible to navigate life's *stuff*. I could get through it all with Him.

He would also be there for the fun decisions like schools, friends, extra activities, colleges, and dating. In all times, good and tough, I was thankful that God held all the wisdom. I could relax (or try to) and lean on Him and not my own understanding. Now today I can add the spouses and grandbabies to this prayer with confidence in the LORD.

Moms, trust God to be there for you *and* your kids! He's got this!

Susan Hurley

Teach Them To Obey

“Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”

Ephesians 6:1

This short, simple verse needs no explanation. Parenting is hard and if kids could just get this one right, it would be so much easier.

We used the word “obey” quite often when our kids were little because obedience has to be taught. But I didn’t want my kids to think our home was a dictatorship, so I would rephrase this verse and say to them, “I obey God, and you obey me.” I think it helped them to realize everyone has to obey sometimes.

We even made up an annoying little song to remind the kids to obey us...”Obey right away, right away, right way. Obey your parents right away...” They hated that song and would rather scurry to do what they were told than hear that song—again.

My kids are grown now and watching them follow God is the joy of my life. God in his infinite wisdom placed the next verse of Ephesians perfectly. *“Honor your father and mother...so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Eph. 6:2*

Children can learn that obedience and honor of parents go hand-in-hand. Don’t be afraid to teach them this wisdom; it ultimately brings blessing to them AND to you!

Debby Kantorik

Ask God for Wisdom

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."

James 1:5

Have you ever found yourself asking: "What is the best decision for my family? Are my child's needs being met? Do I stay at home with my kids or continue to work? Do we hire a nanny or send my child to a childcare facility? Do I need to feed my kid only organic food? Is this sunscreen safe? How do I get my kid to eat vegetables? Am I doing enough for my family?"

Sometimes I can be overwhelmed with questions and wondering if I'm doing a good job as a mom. A lot of wisdom can be found in family and friends, but every child and every family is different. That's why at the end of the day the best thing I can do is go to God with my questions and trust that He will give me wisdom.

You aren't a burden to Him. God wants to give you His wisdom today generously — all you have to do is ask!

Elizabeth Summers

Listening Well

“The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.”

Proverbs 14:1

“Mommy!” “Mommy!” My private moment in the bathroom was interrupted by our 4-year old daughter insistently knocking on the door.

“Mommy! Open the door!”

“I’ll be out in a minute, sweetie. Just wait a minute.”

“But, Mommy, I have a berse for you.”

I cracked the bathroom door open and listened as our little girl solemnly looked at me and said “I praise you. I thank you. I love you.” Oh my. Inopportune time. But a timeless moment. I sure was grateful I hadn’t missed those words coming from her little heart!

Listening to our children turned out to be a choice and a privilege which served me well as they grew up. Sometimes their words weren’t as sweet as the ones uttered through the bathroom door. Sometimes it was painful to hear their confusion, fears and anger—to be enveloped in their tears, whether they felt wronged by me, or by someone else, or by circumstances in their world.

So to all you mothers, I have some “berses” for you from God’s Word. These were wise words on which I “built my house” as I sought to listened well to our children as they grew up:

Proverbs 15:1—*“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”*

James 1:19—*“You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.”*

God bless you, mothers!

Gwenda Baker

Living out Your Purpose

“And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple...”

I Peter 2:5

When Solomon built the temple he did so with dressed stone. Each piece was quarried and cut to fit into a specific place in the temple. The amazing thing about it is that this “dressing” was all done at the quarry, not at the building site. These stones were specially created to form a whole building from the point at which they were being chiseled from the rock. This is what Peter is talking about when he calls us living stones. We are created to do the work God gives us and when we live out our purpose together, we create a thing of beauty.

Mothering is more of a marathon than a sprint. At times, the work of mothering can seem tedious and tiresome, filled with disgusting diapers or things that are just too hard to do, like, tough love. But it is the work God has created for you to do.

In the end, these daily things that loom so large, eventually fade away, and you are left with beautiful memories of your children.

God has specially formed you for the work He calls you to. He has given you the family you have, with the special needs and gifts that they have, with purpose and a plan. At times, you may not think you have what it takes, but God has thought about it and planned it out in advance. As it says in Ephesians 2:10:

For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

How does the knowledge that God specially formed you for your job as a mother, help you to do your work today with joy and gratitude?

Mary Jo Epperson

Life is Messy

“Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant harvest comes by the strength of the ox.”

Proverbs 14:4

When I was a young mother with little children, I was overwhelmed with the endless burden of the repetitive tasks of constant clean up. I was so discouraged and weepy, so I cried out to the Lord for help and He gave me this special verse from his Word, which lifted my spirit and gave me the strength to go on.

The Lord was reminding me that even though raising little ones was a messy endeavor, I would one day be rewarded with the abundant harvest of a strong priceless legacy called “family”. Not only did He give me a long-term vision for my calling, He provided the strength and energy to face those tasks again that day!

I hope today the Lord will give you a long-term perspective too!

Jennifer Welty



Trusting God with my Kids

"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, For the Lord God is an everlasting rock."

Isaiah 26:3,4

As a mom of three grown girls, I have no greater joy than when I see them walking in the truth. But as we all know, sometimes our children make decisions to go down paths that do not follow the truth or God. It is so hard to let go of fear and to trust God with my children!

What has brought me peace and growth in my own faith during these times has been to truly believe and dwell on two particular promises of God. First, God does not lie – every word of God is true. Secondly, God is faithful to his word. If he says it, he will do it.

When I move my foundation of hope from the shaky ground of my children's decisions and place my hope firmly on the rock-solid foundation of Jesus, I find peace and I am able to release my children to God, trusting he is working in their lives, often in ways I can not see, and he is with them every step of the way.

So today, whether your children are little or grown, ask God to help you to keep your mind steadfast on him and to trust Him with all things, including your children.

Robin Spurlock

Doing Good Deeds

“... Well known For her good deeds, such as bringing up children...”

I Timothy 5:10

This phrase from a Bible verse leaped off the page one day when I was a mom of young children. As a follower of Jesus, I wanted to do “good deeds”. Not to earn my salvation—that is a gift of grace from God! I wanted to do “good deeds” to show the love of Jesus to others. The reality was that taking care of my family consumed nearly all of my time. And I thought that if I never got around to doing other good deeds during my day, I was somehow a failure in my calling as a believer in Jesus.

But then I saw this verse! Bringing up my children IS a good deed!! This verse allowed me to relax. Maybe it was a day with endless diapers, laundry, kissing owies, singing A-B-C’s, making mac ‘n’ cheese, celebrating art projects, pushing swings. But in God’s eyes, it was all a good deed, showing the love of Jesus to my own family.

You may be a busier mom that I was—-working outside the home *and* taking care of your family. Relax and be assured today that God sees all that you do, and that it is all a “good deed” in his eyes!

Laurie Schlaepfer

Taking my Eyes Off Me

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. . . Have the same mindset as Jesus!”

Philippians 2:3,5

I married very young and then had a child in the first year of marriage, so I had a lot of growing up to do and fast! It seemed like one day I was focused on doing things just to please myself and then suddenly I was cooking for my dream man and trying to hold a baby in my arms at the same time.

I gave my life to Jesus in my mid 20's and found very quickly that this verse from Philippians was written for me. I was my creed. I had to take my eyes off me and learn to embrace and love what God had given me.

One way I tried to do this is through notes. I loved to write notes. I left them in my kid's lunches, on the kitchen table for my husband, and sent little welcome notes out to the young people that we worked with in various church classes. I didn't always know the needs or background of those folks but they often expressed an appreciation for the letters. Despite the time it took, writing notes helped me shift my focus from myself to that which God had laid on my heart. It made me feel better, happier and more circumspect. Encouraging others is exhilarating!

My “kids” are now 63 and 57 but they know how to send cards, notes and these days even texts!! Even I have learned to text! Who would have thought that in 1956?

Paula Simmons

Cry Out to God

“...I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.”

1 Samuel 1:16

Hannah utters these words to the Prophet Eli in the opening chapter of 1 Samuel. Hannah is a woman in a desperate place. She deeply desires a child, so much so that she is praying in such a way at the temple that Eli thinks she has been drinking. To that accusation, Hannah replies she is “pouring out her soul to the Lord” and “praying out of great anguish and grief.” Despite the years of barrenness, which also brought scorn from others, Hannah turns to the Lord and continues to put her hope and trust in him.

Like Hannah, my road to motherhood was full of anguish and grief. We experienced loss and hardship along the way. It was long, dark, difficult and lonely. There were definitely times when I wondered if I would ever be a mom, something I so deeply desired. Like Hannah, I prayed out of anguish and grief. And, like Hannah, the Lord answered my prayers and gave us a son.

Hannah’s prayers start with anguish and grief but turn to joy as she sings, “My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance.” (1 Samuel 2:1)

I’m still in the early stages of motherhood. I’m sure that this journey will bring times of incredible joy and also significant trials. I hope that in those trials, like Hannah, I will not only continue to pour out my heart, telling God of my anguish and grief, but will also remember to praise God for what he has done and look to him for deliverance.

Are you going through a trial? Remember, God is with you, and you can pour out your soul to him.

Jessica Frankl

Finding a Quiet Moment

*“Give ear to my words, O Lord, Consider my meditation.
Give heed to the voice of my cry, My King and my God,
For to You I will pray. My voice You shall hear in the
morning, O Lord; In the morning I will direct it to You,
And I will look up.”*

Psalm 5:1-3

When I was 32 years old I came to know Jesus as my Savior. I was 34 years old when I met the love of my life and we began our family. At the birth of our first, Jamie, I was 37 and then 22 months later, Kelli was born , and I was 39 years old. We were beyond thrilled and completely thankful to the Lord as we didn't think we would even be able to have children.

The next 23 years were filled with raising our family- Boardwalk fun, home school, braces, music lessons, summer camp, Disneyland, sleep overs, college, weddings, and ultimately releasing them to the care of another, their husbands.

My strength came from, and still comes from, my morning quiet time and journaling to the Lord. I have a file cabinet of journals spanning those years of laying my requests and praises before the feet of my Savior. Those pages are rich in answered prayers, strength, struggle, submission, as well as joy, thankfulness, and praises. I give all the glory *“To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think...”*(Ephesians 3:20).

I encourage all mothers to consider a quiet time daily speaking or writing to Him who hears. Before you know it that “daily” turns into years of conversations with the Lord and a testimony of His faithfulness to look back on.

Faye Malone

Let God Take Your Burdens

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Matthew 11:29

I knew a mom who struggled with fear. She worried so much that, soon, she started noticing that her young children were picking up on her anxiety. She knew she had to get a handle on this somehow, if not for herself, then for her children.

That was when she came up with the box. She found a large shoebox and covered it with brown paper. Cutting a small slit in the top, papers could be placed inside, but no one could see them. Every time her children had some situation that was just too much for them to handle... they were to write it on a small piece of construction paper and slip it into the slot.

The family began to call this the “Too Hard” box. Once, when a neighbor’s cat was mauled by a coyote, that trauma was written down and into the box it went. When a father of a friend was deployed overseas and had to miss the family’s Christmas, into the box it went. They were giving their problems away... and it seemed to help!

One day, her little daughter asked her what happens to all the pieces of paper with the too hard problems on them. The mother thought for a bit before she had an idea. Gathering the children she explained that the box was merely a place to put these hard things, but that the real person who would gladly take these burdens was Jesus. Taking the box out to the outdoor fireplace that they had used to cook their hamburgers that night, she set the box into the glowing coals. She had the children close their eyes and fold their hands in prayer and she prayed: "Jesus, thank you that you take our burdens, especially these that are just too hard to bear!"

We all need to come to the point when we realize all the systems we have put in place cannot substitute for God. Watching the papers burn away, this mom knew this was what they had needed all along; she had been short circuiting the path to peace that God had offered. He said bring your burdens to me, and I will give you rest.

Jesus wants to help us all with our burdens...especially those that are too heavy or hard to bear.

Mary Jo Epperson



Sowing Good Seed

"You will always harvest what you plant."

Galatians 6:7 (NLT)

As it began to dawn on me that I would never have children of my own I essentially had two choices, two bags of seeds I could plant. I could reach into the bag that had seeds of jealousy, bitterness and resentment or I could reach into the bag that had seeds of love, joy, peace and gratitude. In my disappointment, which would I choose to sow? "You always harvest what you plant."

By God's grace alone and in His strength, I chose (and have to choose daily) to sow seeds of love and gratitude. What did I harvest? The opportunity to fully embrace being "Aunt Valerie". It is a harvest of joy and gratitude beyond what I could have ever imagined! No, I didn't give birth to any of these kids, but that doesn't put a limit on my ability to love them and build into them. The joy of reaping relationships that I treasure with these kids and their parents is truly one of the greatest blessings in my life.

There are days I sow through tears of grief (you may too). There are days I feel like I'm staring at dirt that isn't showing any signs of harvest (you may too), but God promises "*you always harvest what you plant*". Whether you are mom, grandma, aunt, step-mom - whatever "field" you find yourself in - reach into that bag of seeds and sow love, sow gratitude, sow joy today. Be proactive, make a phone call, write a note, send a text, say that word of encouragement and see what God does with that seed!

Valerie Webb

Point Your Kids to God

“Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.”

Psalm 143:8

How many times did I failed to love my children perfectly?

Often. I was busy and I didn't hug my son when he needed me, or I failed to give an encouraging word to my daughter because I was tired. Every day I tried to be a good mom. Sometimes I hit the mark and loved well. But I know there were many times I failed.

Maybe you have a sense of failure as a mom. Thankfully, God doesn't fail. So thank God for His unfailing love every morning. He doesn't just love you perfectly, he loves your children perfectly. God pursues his own relationship with them— they're His!

I never could be the perfect mother—-and you can't either. But God will always be the perfect Father. Point your kids to Him!

Debby Kantorik

Drawing Near to God

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

James 4:8

What does “drawing near to God look like?” I don’t know about you but when I was a young mom, I would feel guilty if I didn’t start my day by sitting down and having a quiet time. I soon discovered that that was an unrealistic expectation!

Rather than setting a “time”, think of it this way.... *“Take God off your to-do list and hand the whole thing over to Him. God, who holds all things together, can have everything on your list, including what goes where. He is not one piece on the list; He is the holder of it. Why settle for a piece of God, when you can have the whole peace of God.”* (From *It’s All Under Control*, by Jennifer Dukes Lee.)

When you draw near to God, He can take away your feelings of inadequacy by reminding you that YOU ARE LOVED and then you can love your children well with the love He has so freely given to you. Then, when you lay your heads down at night, you can feel the incomparable satisfaction of knowing that you spent your day with God at the center of it. *“If in the course of a day, it’s hard to remember that you are on God’s agenda, draw a circle around your to-do list and label the circle “God” as a reminder that this is God’s list, not your own.”*

A final thought to ponder.....My dad used to always say....“God sees the BIGGER picture!” Now as a parent of adult children, ages 25, 27 and 29 yrs old, I understand what he meant. I pray today that you, mom, will draw near to the God who loves you and sees the big picture of your life and the lives of your children.

Carrie Clark

Ask God to Meet You

"I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me."

Proverbs 8:17

I grew up in a loving but secular home. My parents encouraged my siblings and me to seek out our own sense of life's meaning. I never felt very good at this, but I can point to specific experiences in my childhood when God tried to reach me.

Then, in my late 20s, after many detours, I became a mom. What a wonderful and overwhelming experience. I wanted to be a good mom and that meant imparting wisdom I didn't have.

That was when my husband's family invited us to church. I hadn't darkened the doorway of a church for over 20 years. Being a mom was the catalyst that prompted me to search out the truth of the Bible. I didn't become a Jesus follower overnight - it took me three long years to trust Him. But, God's word is powerful and He is faithful.

So, if you are a mom still seeking to know how to make sense of this world for your most precious gift – your children – ask God to meet you in the messiness of life. I pray that He will bless YOU on this Mother's Day journey.

Meg Imel

Grace for Daily Failures

“He has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and Free From accusation. . .”

Colossians 1:21-22

Before I became a mom, I was pretty critical of myself. Since becoming a mom, that dial got turned up to 100. The negative internal dialogue is relentless. Every mistake makes me feel like a failure. Bad employee. Bad wife. Bad mom.

But when I let my mind narrate all my faults, I am not living a Gospel life. When Jesus died for us, he forgave our sins. This truth still blows my mind after many years of following him — because of Jesus’ sacrifice, I am actually holy and blameless in God’s sight! That doesn’t mean I don’t mess up, of course I do. But God’s forgiveness is complete and bottomless. It covers over all of my mistakes and never, ever runs out.

Take some time today to luxuriate in God’s gift of forgiveness. Meditate on these truths. When your mind puts your faults on replay, recite this verse instead. My prayer is that God’s grace would amaze you anew today!

Elisabeth Kantorik

Nothing will Separate Me from God's Love

"Nothing. . . will be able to separate us From the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:39

"Jesus loves me this I know..."

I sang this song growing up, and then into adulthood while raising my two children. When they became teens and young adults they would sometimes make choices that brought pain to their lives and to mine. Life didn't always turn out as I had hoped and dreamed.

Among other things, I kept a sense of balance because of these things: knowing Jesus loves me (and loves my children even more than I do!), attending church regularly, reading my Bible, listening to sermons; and having a small core of mature Christian friends around me who I loved and who loved me.

You may have times when your children will make painful choices. Rest in the sure knowledge that God loves them (and you) more than you can even imagine and is the Great Redeemer! He is the One who can be trusted with all the ups and downs life brings your way.

Lee Jilka

Teach Your Children Wisdom for Life

“Guard your heart above all else, For it determines the course of your life.”

Proverbs 4:23

“Mommy, Dennis wants to kiss me. He said he’d give me a dime.”

I’d just left the grassy hillside behind our house where I’d been sitting with our neighbor boy. I was about 10 and he was maybe 11, and very cute!

Dutiful daughter that I was, I ran inside the house to run this proposal by my mother. She was sitting at her typewriter clickety-clacking away on a lengthy letter and, without looking up, advised me “Well, don’t sell your kisses cheap.” I took that as a “yes” and ran back out to the hillside where I received a kiss on my cheek. And a dime. It was sweet!

And even though my mother insisted I return the dime later when I’d told her about the completed transaction, her words stayed with me as I grew into a young lady. “Don’t sell your kisses cheap.”

God’s Word is replete with admonitions to care for our hearts and to keep our focus on Jesus and keep our ways pure in His sight. I really did want to love the Lord my God with all my heart, and both my mom and my dad encouraged this by weaving Scripture into the lives of their five children’s. After dinner each night, Dad gathered us around him in the living room and coached us in memorizing whole chapters — I Corinthians 13, Psalm 1, Romans 12, Psalm 100, Psalm 103. These strong passages became part of the fabric of my life and influenced the paths I took.

What wisdom are you building into the lives of your children? They are never too young to learn simple Bible verses and passages.

Back to kisses and boys, I eventually knew what kind of man I wanted to share my life with, and I waited and waited for God to bring him along. Fourteen years after my childish kiss on that hillside, a godly man walked into the Camp Hammer dining room where I was sitting on the fireplace hearth and introduced himself. And we've been sharing kisses for 45 years now!

Gwenda Baker



Look Up

"I lift up my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip, he who watches over you will not slumber."

Psalm 121:1-3

I am a mother of 2 amazing young adults and 2 somewhat needy pets, the wife of a wonderful husband, the daughter of busy and terrific parents, the family member to a large extended family I love and admire, the friend to several amazing individuals, and the employee working in a terrific job. In all these roles I want to serve in the best way. I begin each day with a vision of the kind of wife, mother, daughter, niece, friend, employee, etc. I long to be, but tasks and concerns often come up and upend that beautiful vision. I have more to do, and less of what I think I need in order to manage all these things well!

As I stumble my way through my day, I envision myself as that Super-Woman. You know the one! The mom who always offers just the right comment at just the right time, holding back all those "cringy" things that we moms tend to blurt out, or the wife who never seems to age, yet somehow has the ability to share the wisdom of the ancient, or the homemaker with the perfectly organized closets, and ever clean windows. The main problem with my thinking? That it is all about and on ME! What I can do... or not...

What do I do when I am overwhelmed and down on myself? I look UP! Up to the Lord of heaven and earth, who sees and knows me, who cares all about me and who I care about. He is the one who is FULLY able, FULLY equipped, and He is MY help! Today, when you are overwhelmed, trying looking up! With your eyes on God, your foot will not stumble. You can walk through your day with confidence knowing he is with you and goes before you.

Laura Bonn

Out of the Mouths of Babes

“Jesus said, ‘Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.’”

Matthew 19:14

The car cut in front of me on Highway 1 and we nearly collided. Furious, I laid on my horn for a good long time, and fumed:

“Idiot! Stupid driver! Watch where you’re going!!”

I was having a little road rage moment all to myself when a small voice came from the back seat.

“Mom?”

Oh, right. The kids were in the car.

“Yes, Jonathan?” My son was about 8 years old.

“Doesn’t Jesus love that guy too?”

Oh, man! My eight year old was reminding me that Jesus wants me to consistently reflect him, even when I’m driving down the freeway and someone cuts me off.

Children often see things more clearly than adults. We teach them biblical truths, and they can easily see when we aren’t living them. I can’t tell you how many times the simple faith of my children challenged me or encouraged me. There’s a reason Jesus told us we need to become like children.

As you teach your children don’t forget to *listen* to their simple faith! Sometimes God will speak to you through them.

Laurie Schlaepfer

More is Caught than Taught

“What I don’t understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise... The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions.”

Romans 7:15, 25a Message Version

We all want our kids to grow inwardly and outwardly and to be rooted and established in God’s love. We want them to experience the depth, height, width, and length of Jesus’ love and share it with others. This kind of growth is not an accident. It is a choice.

Let me make this personal. Sometimes my words and actions speak life to my family; I am encouraging and positive. Sometimes I am impatient or self-righteous and I don’t listen very well, which injures the hearts of those I love the most. The reality is we will always have a mixed narrative. Our moment-by-moment decision to be our best or worst affects whether we are a problem maker or a solution creator. This is part of what it means to be human. Our moment-by-moment decision to lean into Jesus to be our best is what it means to live as a child of God.

Our kids are in the same battle. They want to do what is right, but sometimes—often— they fall short, just like me.

Ask yourself “What could I do right now to cultivate growth in my kids AND in me?”

Consider letting your kids see you acknowledging your weaknesses and leaning into Christ to be the best version of you today. As you choose to grow together, your conflicts will turn into connections, your weaknesses will turn into testimonies, and God’s love will move forward through the stories of your lives.

Suzi Josselyn

Blessed

“Her children arise and called her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.”

Proverbs 31:28

True confession: I use to really hate Proverbs 31. Go read it. It’s all about the “Wife of a Noble Character”. She sounds super amazing and completely competent at every single thing she does. She’s up before dawn and seems to never need sleep. She has several businesses going—trading, real estate, viticulture, garment making. She has plenty of time for ministry to the poor and needy, runs the household, schools the kids. And on top of all of that she is wise and perpetually upbeat about everything—nary a grumble comes from her lips.

I used to think, “well of course her husband praises her—she seems to be doing ALL THE WORK!!” There’s no way in a thousand years of trying that I could become that woman. So can we just cut that passage out of the Bible please?

Of course I eventually realized that this passage is not about all the stuff this woman is doing, as if all women should be doing all that too if they want to be good wives and mothers. Scarlet clothes for the kids? Done. Duvet covers for the bed? Check. Purchase agricultural property? On it!

This passage is actually about virtue and character. The activities of this fictitious woman are hyperbolic examples of godly virtues. What virtues? Love and care of family. Generosity. Reliability. Positivity. Wisdom that comes from reverence toward God.

These are character qualities I want to reflect, because they bring blessing—to my family, to my community, AND to me. I assume you want them too. Relax! You don’t have to start a garment business to be a Proverbs 31 woman. Walk with God, pray, and let his Spirit work in you. He will form Proverbs 31 in you!

Laurie Schlaepfer

