

The background of the top half of the cover is a dense pattern of pink roses. The roses are rendered in a soft, painterly style with varying shades of pink and light green for the leaves. They are scattered across the top, with some in full bloom and others as buds.

365

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR MOTHERS

Joy  
and  
Strength



365

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR MOTHERS

Joy  
and  
Strength



**BroadStreet**  
P U B L I S H I N G

BroadStreet Publishing Group LLC  
Racine, Wisconsin, USA  
Broadstreetpublishing.com

Joy & Strength  
© 2017 by BroadStreet Publishing

ISBN 978-1-4245-5477-5

Devotional entries composed by Janelle Anthony Breckell, Diane Dahlen, Cari Dugan, Claire Flores, Laura Krause, Shannon Lindsay, Stephanie Sample, Jacquelyn Senske, and Michelle Winger.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com). The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™ Scripture quotations marked (NCV) are taken from the New Century Version®. Copyright © 2005 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (NASB) are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. [www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org). Scripture quotations marked (NRSV) are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (TLB) are taken from The Living Bible copyright © 1971. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Design by Chris Garborg | [garborgdesign.com](http://garborgdesign.com)  
Edited and compiled by Michelle Winger | [literallyprecise.com](http://literallyprecise.com)

Printed in China.

17 18 19 20 21 22 23 7 6 5 4 3 2 1





*She speaks with wisdom,  
and faithful instruction  
is on her tongue.*

*She watches over the  
affairs of her household  
and does not eat the  
bread of idleness.*

*Her children arise and  
call her blessed.*

PROVERBS 31:26-28, NIV





## *Introduction*

When life demands your attention, carve out some time with God and find a few moments of peace. It's what all mothers need but can rarely find in the craziness of everyday life.

This one-year devotional brings you the assurance that God truly desires to be with you. As you take some time out with God, you will find the joy and strength needed to get through all that your day holds.

Be refreshed and encouraged as you spend time in God's presence reflecting on the blessing of motherhood.





# JANUARY

“So do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

ISAIAH 41:10, NIV

JANUARY 1

## *Invisible*

Are you feeling invisible today? You may be surrounded by a crowd of people and yet feel alone and isolated. This may be how the woman who needed a healing touch from Jesus felt, but was convinced he would never notice her among so many. She reached out and touched him, and found him fully aware. Hagar, Sarah's servant, was driven from her home by her angry mistress. Wandering lost and alone in the wilderness, God saw her and became her deliverer.

It's difficult to comprehend that as small and insignificant as we are in time and space, God sees each of us and even knows our name. Others may not seem to notice or understand, but God knows our whole story. He is always present, all-seeing, all-wise. No matter where we are, God sees.

*The LORD looks down from heaven  
and sees the whole human race.  
From his throne he observes  
all who live on the earth (Psalm 33:13-14, NLT).*

I am so thankful, Lord, that you not only see me physically, but you see into my heart and mind and know my every thought. Help me always to remember that I am never invisible to you.



JANUARY 2

## Letting Go of Worry

Of all the things God asks us to let go of, for a mother, worry just might be the most difficult. From little things like running out of milk or forgetting to do that load of laundry, to genuine concerns such as the first time our kids go away for a weekend, put on a football helmet, or get behind the wheel, we are tempted to give in to worry. God desires our trust! He wants us to surrender—ourselves and our precious children—to him and his perfect plan. He wants us to rest in his love, and he promises to care for us.

*“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” (Matthew 6:25-27, NIV)*

What worry or fear are you holding on to? What would it take for you to open your hand and give it over to God?

JANUARY 3

## Misplaced Security

It is normal for moms to manage a million things all at the same time. A part of us likes to have control because it gives us a sense of security. But is that security false? What happens when circumstances are out of our control? When relationships are broken, our children are sick, or there just isn't enough money in the bank to cover mounting bills? We allow worry to seep into our hearts. We become anxious and insecure. More often than not, we allow our concerns to debilitate us—to rob us from our sleep and kill our joy.

We don't have to become weary if we remember that we serve a God who loves us so much that he wants us to shrug off the burdens that make us ache and trust him instead. Regardless of the situation and circumstance, God is in control. Our security rests in him and not in our own abilities.

*“Don't let your hearts be troubled.*

*Trust in God, and trust also in me” (John 14:1, NLT).*

The next time life sends you a curve ball, instead of succumbing to fear and scrambling to maintain control, bring your concerns to the one who listens and cares deeply. What are you worried about today? Talk to God and leave it all in his hands.

JANUARY 4

## Not Our Own

Jeremiah, a prophet of God, was called to reveal the sins of the Israelites and warn them of coming judgment. His pleas were ignored and the consequences fell when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. Prior to that catastrophe, Jeremiah made one of the most profound statements in the Scriptures. The Israelites insisted on following the lead of the idolatrous nations around them doing things their own way. They seemingly forgot they were God's chosen people and that God had lovingly directed their steps. In their independence, they fell into sin and lost the promised presence of God.

I wonder how many times we forget whose we are and begin to think we can plan our own course in life. Perhaps we are not happy with God's direction and are resisting the road he has asked us to walk. Maybe today you need to pray with Jeremiah:

*I know, LORD, that our lives are not our own.  
We are not able to plan our own course.  
So correct me, LORD, but please be gentle.  
Do not correct me in anger, for I would die  
(Jeremiah 10:23-24, NLT).*

Correct me, Lord, but please be gentle. Do not correct me in anger, for I would die. I repent of my independence and once again surrender to your direction.



JANUARY 5

## *Summer and Winter*

Those who live in a cold climate understand that winters can get long. As the amount of daylight decreases, it's easy to find discouragement or depression creeping in. Sometimes this is a direct result of just needing more vitamin D to compensate for the lack of sunlight. But sometimes the Lord allows this to drive you to a place of finding a deeper degree of contentment in him.

God created the seasons. They are his making. Winter treasures are like manna—the same manna would be rotten in the summer. Manna that is provided on a daily basis refreshes us and provides the kind of nourishment we need.

*The day is yours, and yours also the night;  
you established the sun and moon.  
It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth;  
you made both summer and winter (Psalm 74:16-17, NIV).*

Are you making the most out of this season or living in complaint? Don't wish away winter. There are treasures there for the talking. If you seek them, they will be found.

JANUARY 6

## Working Hard

What is at the core of our motivations? We all have things that motivate us and reasons why we work hard. We are easily motivated by money, affirmation, and admiration. We might want prestigious titles or big promotions.

As mothers, why do we put our hearts and souls into our families? There is no financial gain, and rarely do we receive affirmation or thanks. Do we do our best so that the world thinks we are good mothers? So that our children like and appreciate us? So that the world will admire our efforts?

*Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men (Colossians 3:23, NASB).*

What motivates you? Do you work hard because that is what is expected of you, or do you work hard to serve and please God? Whatever you do, do it happily in worship to the Lord. He is the giver of your talents and abilities. He is the strength for your work and the center of your creative inspiration.

JANUARY 7

## *Faith Matters*

Sometimes we are hesitant to admit that we are discouraged because our prayers are not being answered. So many godly men and women have believed God for a miracle and not received it on earth. Does that mean their faith was in vain?

God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations and that through him all the peoples of the earth would be blessed. He believed even though in the natural it was an impossibility. God saw his faith and counted him as righteous. Hebrews 11 lists other giants of the faith—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses—and says, “All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it” (Hebrews 11:13 NLT). There may be prayers we utter that we will not see answered in our lifetime. Can we emulate the saints of old and believe no matter the outcome?

*He (Abraham) was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous (Romans 4:21-22, NLT).*

Lord, help me to persevere in faith because my faith alone counts! You hear my prayers and even if I cannot see your response, I know you are working!



JANUARY 8

## *Distracted Parenting*

God isn't asking you to be a perfect mom. He is the only perfect parent. He isn't alarmed by your inadequacies. He knew you would sin, which is why he provided his son as a sacrifice for you to be restored to him when you confess. But there are simple steps you can take to become a better parent.

Have we allowed distractions into our world that are hindering our ability to parent? Some of these distractions could have begun with a well-meaning heart. Perhaps we had questions on how to parent. Now we have found that we are up to our eyeballs in mommy blogs with no answers and more questions. Many times these “helpful” tools hinder us from going to the one who has every answer we ever could need. He knows our children better than we do; therefore, he knows the way to parent them. We only have to ask.

*The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding (Isaiah 11:2, NLT).*

Have you become a victim of distracted parenting? Have you sought the Father for wisdom in parenting before asking the world? He is more than willing to share his heart with you.

JANUARY 9

## *Fearing God*

A child is blessed to have a mother who habitually goes to the feet of God in petition for wisdom. There is security in having a mother who seeks knowledge in parenting God's way and not in the world's way. Mothers who pray for their children and continually put their trust in the Lord create a wonderful atmosphere and safe home for children to grow up in.

Children who grow up seeing their mother trusting in Jesus and seeking him to direct their paths eventually learn to have confidence in God's leading. A mother's example to love and obey God is a wonderful gift to her children.

*In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence,  
And his children will have refuge (Proverbs 14:26, NASB).*

Do you have the fear of God in your home? Do you ask for his wisdom and trust that he will lead you? Take heart, Mom! By entrusting your life to God, you are entrusting your child to his faithful hands as well.

JANUARY 10

## *Sitting with Sinners*

Have you ever felt like you haven't been getting recognition for all the work you have done, either in your job or at home? Have there been times when you have seen other people acknowledged for doing seemingly little? Hard work without appreciation can seem very unfair.

Imagine then how those Pharisees felt when Jesus chose to sit with the sinners! They were bothered by the fact that Jesus was spending time with the unrighteous when they had devoted their whole lives to obeying and working under the law. Jesus responded by saying we don't earn forgiveness; rather, we receive it as a gift. We are all sinners, and yet Jesus chooses to sit with us because he wants to show us mercy. Sit with him and freely receive it!

*“Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’*

*For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners”*

*(Matthew 9:13, NRSV).*

Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner before you, and yet I thank you that you have chosen to sit with me here and now, offering your grace and mercy. I receive your forgiveness as a gift, knowing that it is not what I do that makes you accept me. Help me to be merciful to others, as you have been to me.



JANUARY 11

## *Don't Be Anxious...No, Seriously!*

God is serious when he tells us not to be anxious. He isn't just giving us a suggestion. He is telling us of one of the many privileges we have as his daughters—the gift of never having to worry. Unfortunately, many of us still think we are accomplishing something by worrying; therefore, we continue it.

God alone knows what tomorrow holds, and he knows that we can't alter anything by worrying about it. Furthermore, we weren't made to sustain anxiety. Our bodies weren't built to endure it. This is why worry and anxiety can make us physically sick. Nothing delights God more than a child that demonstrates their trust in his goodness and provision by choosing not to worry about tomorrow.

*Give your burdens to the Lord,  
and he will take care of you (Psalm 55:22, NLT).*

It is an action of great faith and trust not to worry. Trust isn't for the faint of heart. It is an act of maturity. It is a pure, childlike action that takes courage. But know that it is what God intends for you. Ask the Father to help you find the childlike place of trust in him.

JANUARY 12

## *Presence and Protection*

Oftentimes, our culture threatens to destroy the sanctity of family and home. A home that centers around Christ is not easily shaken, nor can it be destroyed. We have nothing to fear because what is God's cannot be destroyed. He reigns and triumphs over anything that tries to take you down.

We can invite God into our homes. Make him Lord over our families. Trust him because he holds us. Our families are untouchable with God's protection. In all times of trouble, God will be there.

*God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;  
God will help her when morning dawns (Psalm 46:5, ESV).*

God dwells in the city that cannot be destroyed. Does he dwell in your home? There is safety in trusting him with your life and home. Giving him presence in your family and house invites his protection as well.

JANUARY 13

## *Born of God*

When children are born, the most significant part in shaping their identity is knowing to whom they are born. They will also continue to be molded by where they are born and who they have to nurture them as they grow. We all have different stories regarding this. We have birth parents, and the circumstance of our conception can be labeled anything from desired to unwanted.

You may have been nurtured by loving parents, uncaring parents, struggling parents, or perhaps even no parents. However, those of us who believe in God have something in common. We are all children of God. It was God who created us and brought us into the world. It is God who has been watching over us since we took our first breath. It was God who was overjoyed when we accepted him as our Savior. We have been born again into God's family and nothing in this earth can take that away from us.

*As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13, NKJV).*

Heavenly Father, thank you that you have called me into your family. Thank you that you love and care for me as your precious child.



JANUARY 14

## *Control the Chaos*

Much of our life feels like a chaotic whirlwind that might never stop; running from activity to activity; washing, drying, and folding what feels like a hundred loads of laundry; cooking meal after meal; stopping fight after fight; cleaning room after room; the list of chaos goes on. With that chaos comes a choice: be crazy in our attitude toward everyone around us, or choose peace. There is an obvious winner.

The chaos of life is what it is. It will be there as long as we have kids, jobs, and houses to run. It can either be embraced as part of life, minimizing the control it will actually have on who we are, or we can buy into the race, giving chaos the control. Choose not to let chaos win.

*This God—his way is perfect;  
the word of the Lord proves true;  
he is a shield for all those  
who take refuge in him (2 Samuel 22:31, ESV).*

What tangible things can you do to embrace the busy, chaotic times in life and remember what truly matters? Don't let chaos gain control of a life that is filled with abundant blessings from the Father who loves you and intricately created you.

JANUARY 15

## Daily Compass

Starting our day with his truth impressed on our hearts serves as a compass for our daily life. His Spirit floods ours with love, goodness, compassion, and understanding. God's whispered reminders allow us to gain perspective in our situations and help us deal with them in the most empathetic way possible.

We serve a gentle and humble Father—a Father who loves us in ways we can't even grasp. He promises communion with him whenever we need it. But this relationship goes two ways. As much as we need his Spirit to serve as our compass, he desires our attention, love, and praise right back.

*Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my Savior,  
and my hope is in you all day long (Psalm 25:5, NIV).*

Do you take dedicated time to thank God for all he is in your life? Think of a moment you shared with your children when they said something like, "I love you, Mommy; thank you for all you do." Imagine your heavenly Father and the joy it brings him when you praise him for his faithfulness.

JANUARY 16

## *Courage for Christ*

What are your hopes for your life? Perhaps you want a meaningful career, to go on worldwide adventures, to become a wife, or to simply raise wise and wonderful children. Of course we all hope to live a life that honors God, but are we courageous about our faith as much as Paul expresses in this verse?

Paul knew that the Christ that he preached was offensive to many people; the gospel was very hard for others to accept. However, Paul was confident that eventually all would know the truth of Christ, and in this, he knew that he would not be ashamed. Would you allow this to be your hope as well? Honor God with your whole life by being courageous enough to share Christ with the world.

*It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death (Philippians 1:20, ESV).*

Jesus, I want to serve and honor you with my whole life. Teach me to understand the gospel and then give me the courage to share you with others around me. Let me hope and expect, as Paul did, that I will not be at all ashamed.



JANUARY 17

## *Escape from Battle*

Maybe you wrestle with anger or greed. Perhaps your struggle is with pride or vanity. It could be that you find it difficult to be honest or kind. Whatever your battle, you don't battle alone. We all have struggles, but God will not allow us to struggle with something too big to conquer.

We can be confident in every battle, in every struggle, and in every temptation, God will give us a way out. An escape plan is ready. When we face temptation, we can ask God for his help. He is faithful, and he will answer our cry.

*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13, NIV).*

What battles do you face today? Cry out to him, and have faith that he will rescue you. He won't abandon you; instead, he will strengthen you.

JANUARY 18

## *The Labor Cycle*

Often the labor of a mother is cyclical. There are many chores that need to be repeated daily. There are three meals that need to be prepared with two or three snacks in between. There are crumbs on the floor, jelly splotches on the counter, and Sippy cups that need to be washed—every day. There is laundry that literally never ends. And after the house gets put back together, the rooms get straightened, and the kids go to sleep, we end our day knowing that many of those same chores will be repeated again tomorrow. Dear mothers, it is easy to grow weary.

Weariness can seep in if we fix our eyes purely on the work set before us. The chores will be required of us tomorrow; we cannot change that. But what we can change is what our eyes are fixed upon. We can fix them on Jesus instead of our labors.

*Never become tired of doing good (2 Thessalonians 3:13, NCV).*

Do you feel weary when you think of all you have to do each day? When your eyes are fixed on him, praise will arise from your heart and lips. You will no longer despise your work; you will enjoy it because you are simultaneously enjoying his presence.

JANUARY 19

## Crown of Life

“When will these hard times ever end, Lord?” Do you find yourself praying again and again to be relieved of the challenges of life? You might be struggling through grief, engaged in conflict with someone, giving up an addiction, or just trying to make it through each day without collapsing from exhaustion. Life presents a lot of testing and temptation.

God doesn't promise an easy life. He does, however, promise a great reward to those who will endure the trials. Strength doesn't have to look like you have it all together when things are hard. It doesn't mean that you come out unscathed in your battles. It means that you have been patient through the struggle and that you have continued to love and trust God. The crown of life is your future hope. One day you will receive God's eternal kingdom, and your troubles will have been worth it. Remain steadfast; your reward is coming.

*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him (James 1:12, ESV).*

Lord, teach me to have patience through these times that seem almost too hard to endure. Forgive me for wanting to escape the challenge and look for an easier way out. Remind me of the value of resisting temptation and standing strong. I look forward to receiving the crown of eternal life.



JANUARY 20

## *The Offender's Heart*

When someone hurts us deeply, it isn't easy to look past the offense and look into the offender's heart. But that is exactly what God does for us, and he wants us to do the same for others. Again, and again, and again. More often than not, we will discover the offender drowning in their own sea of hurt and despair. They, too, need a great measure of love.

If we ask God to see our offenders the way he views them, we will develop a deep understanding and compassion for them. Our hurts may even pale in comparison to their pain. We see that they are lost and desire someone to help them. We give them kindness and grace, just as God gave us kindness and grace.

*As those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you (Colossians 3:12-13, NASB).*

Are you having difficulty showing grace and compassion to someone in your life that has hurt you? Ask God to change your heart toward your offender.

JANUARY 21

## *Qualified for the Job*

Whether “Mom” is your only title or one of several, the day you became a mother you took on a full-time job with crazy hours, non-existent pay, and inconsistent benefits. Some days, it’s the greatest gift in the world to love and serve our families. On others, we find ourselves wondering, does this job get any easier? Any better?

On those days with more responsibilities than time, more grumbling than gratitude, rest in this: your employer is not that tantrum-throwing toddler or eye-rolling teenager. God chose you specifically for this family; you were the only candidate for the job, and you are perfectly qualified. You work for him, and he will give you all the support, recognition, and joy you need.

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving (Colossians 3:23-24, NIV).*

What part of your “work” as a mother is the most difficult for you? Share your struggles with God. Does it help you to remember you are working for him at a job he chose just for you?

JANUARY 22

## *Held in His Hand*

The problems of life are seen all around us, sometimes on a daily basis. We see troubled families, poverty, and sickness. Maybe you are experiencing some of these afflictions. It is comforting to know that God sees our troubles. He is not a God that stands at a distance. He takes our grief in his hand.

You may feel helpless, but God is the helper. When the victims of loneliness, abuse, hunger, and poverty seek out God, he will meet them. God carefully watches over the hurting and he offers his hand. Jesus knew what it was like to suffer. He experienced trouble and grief, so we know he understands. Will you trust him to intervene when you are feeling troubled? Will you commit yourself to him, so that he can help you? He cares for humanity, and he cares for you!

*You, God, see the trouble of the afflicted;  
you consider their grief and take it in hand.*

*The victims commit themselves to you;  
you are the helper of the fatherless (Psalm 10:14, NIV).*

Heavenly Father, I bring my troubled heart before you today. I ask you to consider my situation. I give it over to you, knowing that you understand and that you care for me. Help me trust you as a good Father who is always there to help me in my time of need.



JANUARY 23

## *Pillar in a Shaking World*

We never know how we will react when tragedy strikes, when we are beyond our understanding, or when we are faced with an unshakeable circumstance. What can we do to prepare ourselves? Not much in the physical world. But we can prune our hearts. We can ask for total dependence on our Father. We can more fully understand how deep and wide and long his love is for us, so that when we are faced with uncertainty, we cling to what we know is certain—Jesus.

Jesus is our ultimate support. He is our rock. He is our pillar of strength when we feel unsteady and uncertain. When we question, he is our answer. When we cry out for help, he is our comfort. When we ask why, he whispers his truth of a plan for our lives.

*The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,  
My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge;  
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold  
(Psalm 18:2, NASB).*

What do you think you would cling to in a circumstance that's beyond your understanding? Allow yourself to fall so deeply in love with Jesus that you know nothing else except how to live a life for him.

JANUARY 24

## Comparisons

Comparing your life to your friend's life is dangerous. Even the best of us get caught doing it if we aren't careful to guard our hearts. "She has a better job, a bigger house, and a luxurious family vacation every year. My house is tiny, my job is horrid, and we never get to go on vacation!" Sound familiar?

Jealousy can eat us up inside, leaving us bitter, hardhearted, and cold. Greed and envy can ruin a beautiful friendship. There will always be someone else that has more than we do. Choosing to be content with where we are in life will bring us peace. It will also allow us to genuinely celebrate the fortunes and blessings of others, partaking in their joy. This is a wonderful thing.

*A peaceful heart leads to a healthy body;  
jealousy is like cancer in the bones (Proverbs 14:30, NLT).*

Are you envious of a friend or neighbor? How can you choose to be content with what you have?

JANUARY 25

## *Rules of Happiness*

Discipline is often followed by tears, so it seems surprising when the Bible associates discipline with happiness! While we may feel ashamed when the Lord convicts our heart of wrongdoing, we need to recognize that God's correction is ultimately for our good. He wants us to do what is right because he loves us.

It is said that creating boundaries for children gives them contentment because they are clear about right and wrong. This is the way that God teaches us from his law. He doesn't want to enforce rules so that he can punish us when we fail; he wants us to know righteousness so that we can freely walk in it. Will you let him correct, guide, and instruct you in the way you should go? Be blessed as he continues a good work in you.

*Happy are those whom you discipline, O LORD,  
and whom you teach out of your law (Psalm 94:12, NRSV).*

Lord, thank you for guiding me into every good thing. Give me ears to hear and eyes to see the truth of your ways. Help me to learn from your instruction and to know your grace when I need correction. Let me experience the joy of your discipline.



JANUARY 26

## Turn Down the Volume

Without a doubt, one of the toughest tasks of motherhood is keeping our cool when our children are out of line. How do we model patience and loving-kindness when they are pushing our buttons—hard?

For being such adorable creatures, kids sure can inspire a surprising amount of anger in us, can't they? And that anger can occasionally (or maybe even often) be accompanied by yelling and saying things we wish we hadn't said. It never really helps the situation, does it? When we lose it, we lose sight of our intention to build our children up. We add pain and distance to an already difficult situation.

*Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them (Ephesians 4:29, NLT).*

How do you feel after you yell at your kids? How do they feel? The next time you feel that loud, angry voice bubbling up inside you, remember Ephesians 4:29. Ask the Spirit to give you words of encouragement or the strength to walk away until you feel more in control. And when the inevitable happens and you lose it anyway, forgive yourself. Remember, his mercies are new every morning.

JANUARY 27

## *Fasting*

There are plenty of things that God alone does in our lives. There are things that only he is able to heal and deliver us from. However, there are also areas in our lives that the Lord would love to move in, but he wants us to partner with him to do so. One of the ways he does this is by inviting us to fast.

Fasting is intentionally not eating food for a period of time—whether it is for a meal, a day, or a week. God uses fasting to strengthen us spiritually. When we take time to intentionally not “feed” a primal need so that we might lean into him and get strength from him, we will find our internal strength increases. If we can regularly practice not eating food when we are hungry, we find that our strength and ability to say no to a particular sin also increases.

*“He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30, ESV).*

Fasting is a tangible way to embrace weakness so that God might increase in you. Even if your effort is feeble, rest assured God will honor you for it.

JANUARY 28

## *Beautiful Layers*

The art of a painting lies not in what you see, but in the process that has gone into making it what it has become. Usually a painting begins with inspiration: an idea or emotion that wants to be expressed. It proceeds with sketching, color, texture, and variations in between. A painter rarely produces exactly what they originally pictured.

Our life with God can be like a painting. It begins with our faith. Our belief in Jesus sets up our canvas, but the Scriptures call us to add to the depth of our faith by applying colors of goodness, knowledge, and self-control. The beauty emerges as we add perseverance, godliness, affection, and love. These things take time to develop in us. They can involve mistakes, and they can make us look very different. Do you need to add anything to your faith today?

*For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love (2 Peter 1:5-6, NIV).*

Thank you, Jesus, that you have begun a good work in me. Today, Lord, I need to add some spiritual discipline to my faith. Help me to know you more, help me to control my emotions, help me to persevere, and help me to love.



JANUARY 29

## *Gift of Perspective*

We have all heard it from more seasoned moms: “Enjoy your time now; children grow fast.” It seems they are eager to give younger moms a piece of advice attained over the years. Perhaps it was the same advice they were given. If we read between the lines, though, we can see that it isn’t *advice* they are trying to give; rather, it’s the gift of *perspective*.

For a mother, the days can be excruciatingly long, but the years fly by. When we are surviving the younger years, it feels like the evening will never come. The clock seems to get slower during the afternoon. But, the opposite can be said when our children get older. The clock seems to speed up, and we can’t get enough time with our young adults. We then realize how very quickly they will leave our homes.

*To everything there is a season,  
A time for every purpose under heaven (Ecclesiastes 3:1, NKJV).*

Do you find yourself wondering, *Why did I wish away those younger years of messes and diapers?* Don’t miss your current season by always looking to the next one. The gift of perspective knows that there were treasures in the young seasons as well.

JANUARY 30

## Integrity

Having integrity means we lack nothing and live without imperfection. It sounds impossible. But in Christ, we are made whole and complete—free from any blemish and stain. Therefore, integrity is present in every believer.

The good news is it's not something we have to search for or summon up. We are able to live in integrity and make choices according to his will because of the work that God has already done in us. Our integrity is compromised only when we choose to walk out of his wholeness.

*Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,  
For I wait for You (Psalm 25:21, NKJV).*

In what ways do you choose to walk away from his wholeness?  
In what ways do you demonstrate integrity?

JANUARY 31

## *Tattletale*

Where there are children, there will be tattling. Just about every child ends up on both sides of this issue in the first decade of life. For some, the urge to out wrongdoers becomes powerful, and a tattletale is born.

Tattletales who make it to adulthood without outgrowing their penchant for sharing the flaws and foibles of others get a new name: Gossip. We've all heard the expression, "Nobody likes a tattletale," but have you ever wondered where it came from? What's wrong with exposing wrongdoing? In his incredible Sermon on the Mount, Jesus both originated the complaint against tattletales and exposed the reason: drawing attention to the flaws of others takes the focus off our own.

*"Why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3-4, NLT).*

Ask God to show you any logs you may be overlooking in your life, and thank him for trusting you with this important parenting lesson when you need to help your children learn to worry about themselves.





# FEBRUARY

Love takes no pleasure in evil but rejoices  
over the truth. Love patiently accepts all things.  
It always trusts, always hopes, and always endures.  
Love never ends.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:6-8, NCV

FEBRUARY 1

## Being with Jesus

Christians want to be like Jesus. We ask him daily for his grace, mercy, humility, and love. But the surest way to be like someone is to spend time in their presence.

Have you been with Jesus enough that people take notice? When someone is with you, do they see the attitudes and evidence of Christ in you? By spending time soaking in the presence of the Lord, reading his Word, and learning his ways, people will soon realize that you've been with him. You will be marked as one who has been in his presence and your life will show his glory to those around you.

*The leaders saw that Peter and John were not afraid to speak, and they understood that these men had no special training or education. So they were amazed. Then they realized that Peter and John had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13, NCV).*

God, help me to long for your presence so much that I cannot go without you. Help me to need your Word the same way I need food. Give me a consistent longing to be with you so that when people see me, they will see the clear mark of Christ.



FEBRUARY 2

## *Break Every Chain*

There is a chance to start over—every day if we need to. From the inside out, we can be transformed and our hearts renewed. We can essentially remake ourselves with the help, healing, and transformative nature of Christ! Jesus died on the cross to promise us a life free from the bondage of sin, free from hopelessness, free from any chains that try to trap us. In Christ, we are set free.

We need to hear the truth of Christ's promise for us and stop the cycle of hopelessness, defeat, and bondage to sin. All we need to do is get on our knees and pray.

*His purpose in all of this is that they should seek after God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us (Acts 17:27, TLB).*

Is there an area of your life that you need to repent of and receive freedom from? Wait for God's voice to permeate the deepest, saddest parts of you. He wants you to live a life where he takes care of you. He desires a relationship with you. He is pursuing your heart. He is pursuing all of you.



FEBRUARY 3

## *The Forgiveness Circle*

Many of us long-ago memorized a version of the prayer Jesus gave us in Matthew 6 and have repeated it hundreds or thousands of times. Many have taught it to their children as well. We ask for God to be glorified, for just enough food for today, to be forgiven the way we forgive, and to be protected from temptation. “That’s all you need to say,” Jesus tells us.

Wait. Back up. To be forgiven how? Since we are all sinners, God’s grace is what we count on. Our lives depend on his forgiveness. Just to make sure we got the point, after sharing the prayer in verses 9-13, he follows up with this:

*“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15, NLT).*

How are you teaching your children the importance of forgiveness? According to Jesus, there’s only one way to get it, and that is to give it. How is this principle working in your own life?

FEBRUARY 4

## *Illuminated*

From the beginning of time, humans have known to be ashamed when they have done wrong. Look at Adam and Eve who hid once they were aware of their great sin against God. However, God is light; he is able to expose everything that is hidden. This can explain why we don't like to communicate with God when we know that we have done wrong—we don't want our deeds exposed.

But Jesus changed all of that. The Bible says that those who believe in him are not condemned! We have come to the light and believed in Jesus; we have received the truth and are saved. If you are struggling with sin, remember that those deeds can be forgiven because you are in God.

*“All who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God” (John 3:20-21, NRSV).*

Heavenly Father, sometimes I feel burdened because of my sin and I want to hide from you. I ask you to relieve me of this burden, and remind me that I am forgiven.

Let me approach you with boldness, exposing all of my sin, accepting your grace, so that I can walk confidently in your light.

FEBRUARY 5

## Short Years

Motherhood is such a gift. It requires selflessness. It requires work. It tests your patience. And sometimes, the days feel really long. But the days that you are knee-deep in diapers and up at all hours of the night go quickly. Soon you will be entrusting others to care for your children, and eventually asking your children to take care of themselves. So, hard-working mothers, embrace all that motherhood brings—the beautiful and the hard, the days of the laughter and the days of sickness, the days of play and the days of work, the moments of joy and the moments of frustration.

Through all of the years, we know that Jesus is walking alongside us. In every moment, no matter the circumstance, he is there; laughing along with us and wiping away our tears. Motherhood is a gift—a privilege. It is honoring and life-giving.

*May the Lord lead your hearts into a full understanding and expression of the love of God and the patient endurance that comes from Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:5, NLT).*

Do you frequently experience the ups and downs of motherhood? Remember in the moments of weakness and moments of joy, that motherhood truly is a gift. And remember who is right beside you through it all.



## *No Parenting Guidebook*

Do you remember those early days as a new mom? However God blessed you with a child, there were likely a couple of terrifying first few moments. One minute it is just you, and the next, there's this tiny being you're suddenly responsible for. Your heart is flooded with love, but your hands have no idea what to do. A guidebook would have been nice.

There are a million parenting books available, blogs to read, and advice to collect from family and friends who have gone before us on this parenting journey, but we still have to figure it out for ourselves. Before we know it, we do. We don't *perfect* it, but we're parents. We're certifiable women responsible for another little person, and he or she is surviving just fine. Because really, our guidebook for parenting is love. No matter how often our babies are eating, or how many hours they are sleeping at night, our little ones are loved. That is not only surviving, that is thriving.

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! (Romans 11:33, NASB)*

Can you see how far you've come in loving your children?

FEBRUARY 7

## *Hills not Heels!*

Make sure you read that verse right. God isn't going to make you walk in your high heels; that would just be mean! Sure, we like to get dressed up from time to time, but we know that high heels should be left behind when we need to do some real walking!

When you need strength, the Lord God is there to help. Like a deer, we want to be able to walk through the hard times gracefully and climb our mountains with steady feet. We don't want to be overcome with weariness, and we certainly don't want to be stumbling the whole way through our difficulties. Are you in need of God's strength today? Instead of reaching for your heels, remember the high hills and God's grace that is yours to help you walk up them!

*The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet,  
and He will make me walk on my high hills (Habakkuk 3:19, NKJV).*

Lord God, be my strength today. I have some difficult things to face and I want to be gracious and able to endure the hills. I trust you to guide my each and every step.

FEBRUARY 8

## *Calm in the Storm*

Think about the scariest storm you've ever experienced. Are there days—or even weeks—when your life reminds you of that storm? Obligations pelt your skin like sleet, pressures swirl around you like the January wind, and bills come at you like a tornado.

Only angry clouds are visible everywhere we look. What about little storms: a sick kid the day of a deadline, or a forgotten carpool trip? Where do we go for peace?

*Soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water.*

*Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"*

*When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:37-40, NLT)*

Even if skies are blue in your world today, you know a storm will come eventually. Will you seek safety and comfort from the one who calmed the sea, or will you paddle furiously on your own? With a few words, Jesus quieted the storm. He ended it. Have you ever asked him to do this for you—believing he could?



FEBRUARY 9

## One Master

We cannot serve two masters. We just can't. Our *masters* can look very different depending on our lives. One master is God and our relationship with him. The other? It might be our family, wealth, social status, friends, work, hobbies, or food. It's something that sits on the cusp of dominating our lives.

We can't serve both masters equally; one has to be placed second. If we spend our time and energy on serving God, if we devote ourselves to him, we will reap great eternal reward. But if we choose to serve anything other than him, if we devote ourselves to that other master—whatever it is—we will lose in the end.

*“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Matthew 6:24, NIV).*

What master are you serving with the way you live your life? Choose wisely today! Choose to serve the master that matters—the one who loves and cares about you.

FEBRUARY 10

## *He Is Faithful*

The faithfulness of God is something we so easily find ourselves questioning. Though he has proven himself time and time again throughout history, we still wonder whether or not he will come through for us.

But the reality is that whether the sun is shining or the rain is pouring, whether your song comes easily or your tears pour freely, he continues to be faithful. No matter how long you wait, he remains. He will never turn his back on you, and he will never forget the promises he has made. He sees you. He sees you on the nights when you're weary and ready to give up, but instead you bow your head and bless his name. He sees you when you're at the end of yourself and you cry out to him in desperation. He sees and he understands.

*All of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!" (2 Corinthians 1:20, NLT)*

Lord, give me the strength to wait on your promises and to never lose faith in your faithfulness.

FEBRUARY 11

## *Forget Not His Benefits*

Have you ever noticed the raw humanity of David in the psalms? David is known for the many exploits that he performed courageously. He killed a lion, a bear, and a giant! But the psalms offer us a glimpse into David's heart between his valiant battles. He continually wrestled with his own heart and sin. He wrote of the attributes he knew to be true of God only to follow it up with phrases like, "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?" (Psalm 13:1, NASB)

We should not berate ourselves for faith that one day makes us feel like we could slay a giant and the next day we wonder if God even hears our prayers. We are human. What we can do, on those rough days, is take time to remember who he says he is.

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all that is within me,  
bless his holy name!*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits (Psalm 103:1-2, ESV).*

Do you feel like you are prone to forget the benefits of God even if you seemed to know them an hour ago? Take time to ponder the attributes of God. In doing so, he will lift your head.



FEBRUARY 12

## *Light to the Eyes*

God can help us see life through his eyes. He can bring us beyond our feelings to see the truth about the situation we are facing. We serve a loving Father who longs to see us rejoicing and recognizing the faithfulness of his love for us.

There is no situation too difficult for him, no trial he can't overcome, no amount of unloving action on our part that can ever sway him from desiring a relationship with us.

*How long must I wrestle with my thoughts  
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?  
How long will my enemy triumph over me?  
Look on me and answer, Lord my God.  
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,  
and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"  
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.  
But I trust in your unfailing love;  
my heart rejoices in your salvation.  
I will sing the Lord's praise,  
for he has been good to me (Psalm 13:2-6, NIV).*

What situation do you need discernment about today? Ask God to give light to your eyes. If nothing else today, let him impress upon your heart a measure of his unfailing love for you.

FEBRUARY 13

## *Hope that Doesn't Disappoint*

We've all been disappointed numerous times in our lives. The hard truth is that whenever we hope for something, we put ourselves at risk to be let down. We've all learned this lesson the hard way too many times to not brace ourselves for disappointment in our dreaming.

But there is one hope that will never be lost. No matter how long we find ourselves waiting, or how distant the fulfillment may seem to us—when we put our faith in God, we will not be let down. We will someday clearly see the result of our belief in his coming kingdom. The trust we've placed in his promises will be rewarded, and our hearts will not be disappointed.

*You will be rewarded for this;  
your hope will not be disappointed (Proverbs 23:18, NLT).*

Lord Jesus, thank you that you will fulfill my hope in you. I have been disappointed by many people and things in my life, but I know that you won't let me down. Thank you that my heart is safe with you.

FEBRUARY 14

## Unfailing Love

Could your child lose your love? Think of the worst things they've ever done, or if they are still very young, imagine the worst they could do. Now picture them sleeping. Recall the day they were born. Despite any level of anger, disappointment, or betrayal, could you honestly turn off your love for them?

Now let's think on this: God loves us *more*.

*I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39, NLT).*

Consider all the evidence in your life of God's love for you. Write out a prayer of thanksgiving and love to the one who loves you without condition and without fail.



FEBRUARY 15

## *The Flock*

When God created Adam, he also made him a partner. He said it's not good for us to be alone. We are meant to live in fellowship with others. In the Bible we are called sheep—and sheep are apparently very social animals. Sheep require other sheep to be around or they won't display normal sheep-like behavior. They just don't do well on their own.

In light of this, isn't it interesting that we are compared to sheep in Scripture? A sense of normalcy is possible when we don't isolate ourselves from others. There's no need to feel anxious or alone in this journey of life because God has given us a family—his family.

*You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it  
(1 Corinthians 12:27, NIV).*

Do you have a flock of sheep to accompany you in this life? Be encouraged today to embrace the church community around you. Make the effort to be hospitable and spend dedicated time with others who are like-minded. You might be surprised just how *normal* you are.

FEBRUARY 16

## *Lead Me on Level Ground*

Walking before God on the path of righteousness can feel like an impossible task. Just when we begin to feel holy, we succumb to temptation and we fall. We are reminded all at once of our innate humanity and overwhelming need for God.

We don't immediately know how to do God's will when we get saved; we have to be taught. We don't naturally begin to walk in his ways; we need to be led. The beautiful thing about salvation is that we aren't expected to do any of it on our own. God puts his Spirit within us and leads us in righteousness on level ground. The sanctified, Christian life is only possible when we completely surrender ourselves to the grace of God, the teaching of Jesus Christ, and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

*Teach me to do your will,  
for you are my God;  
may your good Spirit  
lead me on level ground (Psalm 143:10, NIV).*

Thank you, God, that you don't expect me to live a righteous life in my own strength. I need your grace and you give it freely. Thank you for teaching me and guiding me every step of the way, so I can bring you the glory and the honor you are worthy of.

FEBRUARY 17

## *Sharpening Character*

If anything can reveal our shortcomings and mistakes, motherhood can. It's a hard job! It tests our patience, our faithfulness, and our ability to give unselfishly and joyfully. It completely stretches our character in ways it has never been stretched before.

Motherhood sheds light on our weaknesses and keeps us humble. God uses our children to unearth our weaknesses and encourage change.

*"I have swept away your fences like a cloud,  
your sins like the morning mist.*

*Return to me, for I have redeemed you" (Isaiah 44:22, NIV).*

How have your children sharpened your character? Have you ever ended a terrible day feeling awful—knowing that you have let your children and God down? Be encouraged in those moments because he gives you grace. Every day is a new day.



FEBRUARY 18

## *Effective Discipling*

We know that children loved to be around Jesus because he loved to be around them. Children are perceptive. They wouldn't keep going to someone if that person didn't like them. Jesus' love toward them was deeply compelling.

As mothers, our most important job is to point our children to Jesus. Churches and ministries provide many aids to assist us in our job of discipling our children, but we must make sure the fruit of these aids is drawing our children closer to God and not hindering their growth. While many of these tools and programs might be helpful, they can never replace a child's own parent sitting down with them and pointing them to the Lord.

*“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Luke 18:16, NIV).*

Do you spend time discipling your children or do you let other ministries do it? You will care far more about your child's spiritual growth than a volunteer will, and you will be better able to detect if the program is helping your child really know God. Do your best to make sure your children view God rightly.

FEBRUARY 19

## *Water Isn't Concrete*

Have you ever stepped out in “blind faith” and said yes to something crazy that God called you to? The valley of decision can be long and difficult, so when we finally take that step of saying yes, we can expect everything to come together almost instantly on the other side.

But, when God calls you to get out of the boat, to walk on the water with him—you can't expect to step out onto solid ground. Water will never be concrete. Why are we surprised at the raging waves that at any moment could sweep us under? The circumstances in life are never going to be sure. Our plans are never going to go off without a hitch. After all, we're trying to walk on water. But if we keep our eyes focused on his, we can walk across even the most tempestuous waters, as if they were simply solid ground.

*Peter said, “Lord, if it is really you, then command me to come to you on the water.” Jesus said, “Come.”*

*And Peter left the boat and walked on the water to Jesus  
(Matthew 14:28-29, NCV).*

Lord, keep my eyes locked on you so that when I step out in faith in response to your calling, I will walk on even the most difficult waters as if my feet were planted on solid ground.

FEBRUARY 20

## *Value in the Menial*

The tasks of motherhood can sometimes take on an oppressive quality. As intelligent, vibrant beings, full of life and promise and acquiring wisdom every day, mothers can begin to feel underutilized, underappreciated, and overwhelmed.

When this happens, take a look at Jesus and what he showed his disciples. His last task—his final act of service—was to pick up a towel, get down on his knees, and wash their feet. Tenderly, lovingly, he took each disciple's foot into his hands, removed the grime, and soothed the blisters and calluses. It was a lowly job, and it demonstrated the highest love. *This is how precious you are to me*, his simple act said.

*"I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you"*  
(John 13:15, *NLT*).

Can you allow this verse to help you begin to see the more menial, thankless aspects of your role in a new way? Do you believe you are following Jesus' example when you wipe runny noses, change dirty diapers, or even pick up discarded juice boxes and soda cans? Why, or why not?



FEBRUARY 21

## *Expectations*

How many mothers have dropped their children off in the nursery at church and left them crying? Not wanting to release their grip on safety, the children cling to their mothers like newborn kittens, claws out and not letting go. Moms start whispering to them that they will be fine, that mommy will be back, that they will have fun with their friends. Somewhat reluctantly, they hand them over to the childcare volunteer with an apologetic look and quickly back out of the room. It can be a devastating feeling.

The morning they envisioned of sitting and gleaned wisdom from the sermon has vanished. Instead, they stare at the screen wondering if their child's number will be called. They're distracted from fully enjoying the morning they had expected. *Expectations*. Our expectations can let us down in unthinkable ways. They can take us away from enjoying the moment, and are often too controlling.

*Know that wisdom is such to your soul;  
if you find it, there will be a future,  
and your hope will not be cut off (Proverbs 24:14, ESV).*

How do expectations sometimes hinder your experience? Every once in a while, practice the art of giving up your expectation to God. It is out of your hands and rests in the hands of the Father who knows best.

FEBRUARY 22

## Truly Special

We all want to believe that we are special. Most of us grow up being told that we are, and it feels good to believe it. But over time, we look around us and realize that, really, we are just like everyone else. Doubt begins to creep in, making us second guess ourselves and damaging our self-confidence.

Long before you were even a wisp in your mother's womb, you were set aside and marked as special. You were chosen to be God's special possession, and that's a pretty amazing thing.

*You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9, NIV).*

Thank you, God, that you see me as special. I revel in that knowledge today. You call me out of the darkness of the ordinary and bring me into the light of the extraordinary. You have hand-picked me and you love me.

FEBRUARY 23

## Admitting Fault

Depending on how old your children are, they may not know yet that you are not perfect. If you are still in that honeymoon phase of motherhood, enjoy it; it will be over soon enough.

Because we are all sinners, our kids will see us sin. Because of their proximity and the intimacy of the relationship, they'll see it a lot. Let them see! Admitting our faults and failures is one of the best ways we can teach them about God's grace. Let them know God forgives us the moment we regret and confess our actions.

*If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts (1 John 1:8-10, NLT).*

Do you struggle with letting your children see your vulnerable, less-than-perfect side? Or have trouble admitting when you are in the wrong? Ask God to help you examine your heart, and to bless you with the freedom and confidence to admit your shortcomings—to him, to your children, and to yourself. Thank him for loving you just as you are.



FEBRUARY 24

## *Time for Celebration*

Birthday cake, colorful balloons, banners, and joyfully wrapped gifts... celebrating our children's birthdays is a wonderful and timeless tradition. We take extra care to make sure that the birthday girl or boy feels loved, treasured, and valuable. Birthdays are an opportunity to celebrate another year with our sweet children. We ponder their wonderful place and presence in our family.

We are not the only ones who enjoy celebrating our children. It warms God's heart to celebrate them as well. He was the one that created them with so much thought, care, and detail. Each day in our children's lives has value and importance to the Father. To him, every day is worth being celebrated.

*"The Lord your God is in your midst,  
A victorious warrior.  
He will exult over you with joy,  
He will be quiet in His love,  
He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy"  
(Zephaniah 3:17, NASB).*

Do you know how loved and celebrated you are by God? The way you celebrate your children is the way the Lord loves to celebrate you—every single day. He loves to love you.

FEBRUARY 25

## Limitless

Do you struggle with where you fit? Are you on a hunt to find your purpose? Do you feel like you've changed, and the purpose you thought God had for you seems vastly different now? It can be so confusing, can't it? When we think our purpose is unclear, we can easily become blind to God's capacity.

Friends, God has no capacity. We serve a God without limits. He tells us that, in him, anything is possible. You don't need to have confidence in what you can do—only in what he can accomplish through you. He is capable of absolutely anything, and his plans for you run deep.

*Again and again they limited God,  
preventing him from blessing them.  
Continually they turned back from him  
and wounded the Holy One!  
They forgot his great love, how he took them  
by his hand and with redemption's kiss  
he delivered them from their enemies (Psalm 78:41-42, TPT).*

God, I open my heart and mind to the fullness of your love. Thank you for my purpose in life. Help me walk in a way that will fulfill that purpose.

FEBRUARY 26

## Corporate Gathering

Sometimes getting to church is hard. The idea of spending a Sunday morning at home on the couch in our pajamas is tempting—especially when it has been a long week. The work it would take to get ourselves and others ready to go and out the door is maybe more energy than we have at that moment. Perhaps we feel like going to church is a waste of time when there is so much catching up to do at home: the lawn needs to be mowed or the kitchen needs a deep clean.

Is church worth the effort and the time? Always. Worshiping with fellow believers is refreshing. There is strength that comes from being surrounded by the body of Christ. At church we can receive prayer, encouragement, and comfort in knowing that we are not alone. Church is a place we can find rest and feel at home. We are united with family, receiving a greater understanding of who God is.

*Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:24-25, NKJV).*

Do you find it hard to make it to church consistently? Even when your body is tired, your soul will feel renewed. When your schedule is hectic, you can experience peace. It is definitely worth the effort.



FEBRUARY 27

## Heart Center

We've said it to our kids on a number of occasions: "You have two choices." Then we proceed to give them their options. Probably one of the choices would be better, but we give them two options to ensure we have a back-up. God also gives us choices. Because of free will, we choose how we spend our time, what we invest our energy in, and what we fill our hearts and minds with.

His desire for us is that we choose him. He wants us to stay in communication with him as we are faced with daily choices. We keep God as our focal point and continually meet him back at our center, so we don't ever steer too far off course.

*Brothers and sisters, think about the things that are good and worthy of praise. Think about the things that are true and honorable and right and pure and beautiful and respected (Philippians 4:8, NCV).*

Where do you choose to spend the majority of your time? What choices could you eliminate to stay centered on Jesus? In a busy life of choices, it's important to know your back-up is also your best option—seeking God and choosing life with him.

FEBRUARY 28

## *God Likes Being a Parent*

While we are mothers, do we realize that we also get to be children? God will always call us his children. He enjoys being our dad, and we can enjoy being his child. That means we can still ask him our questions the way a child would. It means we can still tell him that we don't have it all figured out. It means that we don't have to bear the weight of providing for all our children's needs. We can simply ask our Father in heaven to take care of them in the same way he takes care of us.

Children aren't afraid to say when they are frightened, confused, or worried. They are expected to take these needs to their parents and get direction and comfort. We can do the same with God.

*"The Lord will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the Lord has been pleased to make you a people for Himself" (1 Samuel 12:22, NASB).*

Mother, you have an invitation to go to God as a child. He delights in this because he loves being your Dad. Can you relate to God fearlessly as a child would?






# MARCH

Let us run with endurance the race that is set  
before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and  
perfector of our faith, who for the joy that was  
set before him endured the cross.

HEBREWS 12:1-2, ESV





MARCH 1

## Overwhelming Devotion

God in his great power and faithfulness never fails us, never gives up on us, and will never leave us alone to fend for ourselves. His love for us remains—regardless of our circumstances or our weaknesses—strong and immovable. His devotion to his children exceeds that of all parents. He is without limits, and nothing can ever change his devotion.

This truth is overwhelmingly satisfying; when such devotion has been proven, what else could attract our gaze? Where else could our eyes find such beauty and purity as they do upon the face of Jesus? In awe, we recognize that his gaze is fixed right back at us, seeing us as a lovely and worthy prize. We can neither deserve this gaze nor escape it. We are flawed, but he is unwavering in his love for us.

*This forever-song I sing of the gentle love of God overwhelming me! Young and old alike will hear about your faithful, steadfast love—never failing! Here's my chorus: "Your mercy grows through the ages. Your faithfulness is firm, rising up to the skies" (Psalm 89:1-2, TPT).*

Thank you, Father, that you are wholly devoted to me. Your love is mine to enjoy forever. Help me to remain in that love.

MARCH 2

## *Winter Blues*

A number of mothers find themselves stuck in long winters. They envision Floridians lying outside applying sunscreen to their toasty skin. They think if only they could be somewhere warm, they would be happy. But, the Floridians think about those who live in cooler states in the summer. As they endure day after day of 100+ degree temperatures and impossible humidity, they find themselves longing for a 70-degree summer day where the heat doesn't make them or their children nauseated.

It's easy to think contentment will come from a particular place. If it isn't the weather that has us down, it's our house, our job, our weight. This is because contentment was never meant to come from places or things. It comes from being close to him and walking in gratitude.

*That my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent.  
O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever  
(Psalm 30:12, NASB).*

Can you see how complaint creeps into your life and takes over your mood? Try thanking God for your blessings today and see what happens.

MARCH 3

## Mom Fail!

Maybe not today, but one day, you will wonder whether you have failed as a mother. This most important mission of your life—to raise a loving, caring, responsible human being and send them into the world to share God’s light—will seem like a task you are simply not up to.

This feeling may last a short time, as a child goes through a phase of selfishness or ungratefulness, or it may take a much longer road as we watch our sweet baby struggle with addiction or a life of crime. We can be reassured by Jesus’ words. If we are good, only good fruit can come from our lives regardless of how things may appear.

*“Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?  
A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit.  
A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce  
good fruit” (Matthew 7:16-18, NLT).*

Do you love God with all your heart? Have you accepted the free gift of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus? Rest assured. You are doing this mothering thing right. Cling to God’s promises and savor his Word.



MARCH 4

## *You Are Beautiful*

Stereotypes become stereotypes because of the truth in them. We think of a group of girls comparing flaws, calling themselves ugly while reassuring their friends of their beauty. We've heard it. We've lived it. Are you welcoming and accepting of the woman you see in the mirror, or do you analyze, criticize, and judge her?

Let us hear what the Bridegroom says about us. Let us believe the encouraging words of others, and silence the voice in our heads that tells us we are anything but beautiful. The voice is a lie. God's Word is truth, and he says we are beautiful.

*You are altogether beautiful, my darling;  
there is no flaw in you (Song of Songs 4:7, NIV).*

Lord, I admit I find it hard to see myself as beautiful sometimes. I choose to look at myself today and smile no matter how difficult it is. I ask that when I do, you will show me how you see me, and help me believe it in my heart.

MARCH 5

## Other Adults

You need some friends in your life who love you and your kids: friends who will be committed to your kids almost as much as you are. Other adult relationships are important for your children's maturity, spiritual growth, and understanding of accountability. If your children are struggling with something, and aren't comfortable talking to you about it, you want a mentor that they can talk to—that you are both comfortable with.

Some of us may already have those people in our lives. Talking with them about their important role in our children's lives is critical. They can be wise sounding boards in the life of our children if they know what we're expecting.

*The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2, NIV).*

Who are the people in your life that you know are committed to your kids? Pray with them about what it might look like to have them be more active in the role of giving your children Godly counsel.

MARCH 6

## *The God of My Salvation*

Do we ever stop and enjoy the God of our salvation? We might be involved in many religious activities. We might be in church every week or three times a week. We might have read every popular Bible study out there. We might have attended every conference that has come to our city and regretted the ones we missed. But do we leave these activities feeling full? Maybe it's time to steal away and just enjoy Jesus.

We should take a moment to remember his kindness that drew us to him in the first place. It was his quick forgiveness that let us know that our sins would not be counted against us. We needn't be weighed down by guilt. Jesus bore it all, including our shame, on the cross.

*Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,  
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit (Psalm 51:12, NKJV).*

If you never did another thing for God, that would be ok. You aren't getting into heaven based on your merit. You weren't saved based on your good-works. You were saved because Jesus did what you were powerless to do. May the Lord refresh you and encourage you today as you delight in him.



MARCH 7

## *Pray Like You Mean It!*

When you pray, are you doing it in a spirit of boldness, or are you praying weak prayers? It's as if we are afraid to bother God with our requests. For goodness sake, we better not pester him too much, or perhaps he won't answer them at all, right? So we speak tentatively, "Dear Lord, if it is your will, it'd be great if you could..."

"Father, I know you have so much on your plate, but I'd love it if..."

Stop with the weak prayers. The Lord knows your heart already. Believe that he can do what you are asking. There is no need for caution with the Father who loves you so dearly. Jesus said so himself. Step out boldly in faith, beginning with your prayer life.

*"If you can?" said Jesus.*

*"Everything is possible for one who believes" (Mark 9:23, NIV).*

God, help me overcome my unbelief. I want to believe that everything is possible because I believe in you.

MARCH 8

## *Happiness or Joy?*

The pursuit of happiness is in the center of western culture. We often seek it in materialism and experiences. However, happiness is only a quick band-aid that masks our pain and sorrow. In time, happiness fades and the hollow spot that joy should fill remains. And so the search continues. We find ourselves stuck in a continual cycle of filling the emptiness with temporary happiness.

True joy, however, is rooted deep in a believer's heart, fueled only by the confidence that is Jesus Christ. Unlike happy feelings, joy is not an emotion that easily comes and goes based on present circumstances. Joy remains firmly rooted despite trials and tribulations.

*“Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy” (John 16:22, NIV).*

Are you pursuing happiness or joy? Joy is an affirmation of your complete trust in Jesus and a result of being thankful for what he has done.

MARCH 9

## *Love the Joneses*

When God commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves, he wasn't saying to have them over for dinner one night and check it off our list. We should love them literally as we love ourselves and our children. This can be difficult. We can't get over that unkind comment made last week, or last year.

We are commanded to love even when it doesn't come naturally to us. Our flesh wants to seek revenge or simply not be hospitable. Jesus loved all he encountered. He desires us to be his hands and feet—his walking-and-talking love here on earth. When we say that we love the Lord, and yet do not show it to those around us, we look no different than the world.

*“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31, NIV).*

Who is that person or family you've wanted to connect with but haven't? Can you invite them to coffee or over for dinner sometime? You can spread the love of Jesus by loving those around you—by engaging in conversation, inviting them into your home, or learning about their life.



MARCH 10

## Let God Win

Don't believe the lies. There is an enemy out there who wants to steal, kill, and destroy. One of the most powerful ways he does that is through filling our hearts with things we think are true about ourselves. Those lies fill our minds with hatred, so that when we look in the mirror, we start hating what we see. I'm so ugly. I don't deserve anything good in my life. I screwed up again; why do I even try?

These thoughts make the Father weep. He loves us! He knits us together and sets us apart. He cherishes every breath we take, and in the name of Jesus, we can rebuke the enemy so those lies no longer fill our heads and overtake our hearts.

*Truthful words stand the test of time,  
but lies are soon exposed (Proverbs 12:19, NLT).*

Jesus, lift the veil from my eyes so I can see clearly. Show me the lies I am believing that are destructive. I know you love me and you want to see me walk in truth.

MARCH 11

## Heirlooms

An heirloom is something of great value passed down from generation to generation. Mothers can give their daughters and sons the most precious heirlooms to treasure and pass on to their own children: an heirloom that is more precious than diamonds and rings—an heirloom of faith.

We should purpose to live our lives with complete trust in God. Our confidence in him is a wonderful testimony to our children of his faithfulness. We can live out a life of faith before them.

*“I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you”*  
(Genesis 17:7, NIV).

What spiritual heirlooms are you passing on to your children? Let them see your head bowed and arms raised in worship to Jesus Christ. Then they will remember your life devoted to God and will share it with their children and grandchildren. They will own the faith that you possessed.

MARCH 12

## *Like a Child*

Children who know they are loved by their father don't approach him with fear. It is so sweet to see little ones run into their father's arms without abandon. They know without a doubt that his arms will receive them and hold them close. They don't question their father's love for them. They expect to be received and carried.

Is this how we approach God—like a child who knows loved? Or do we forget how loved we are and fear him for where we have fallen short? Do we let our guilt hinder us from running into the Father's arms?

*Then Jesus called for the children and said to the disciples, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children" (Luke 18:16, NLT).*

How do you approach God? He desires you to run to him. He bids you to come like a little child. He will always receive you with open arms.



MARCH 13

## Conscious Choice

Would you want someone to love you if they didn't really want to? If someone were forced or even paid to love you but you knew their love wasn't genuine, would you enjoy that type of love?

We have the conscious ability to choose whether or not we will love God. God will not make us love him or force us to follow him. The freedom that we have to choose is the most wonderful and the most fearful gift we have been given.

*"Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!" (Deuteronomy 30:19, NLT)*

MARCH 14

## *Delayed Results*

Mothering day in and day out can get wearisome. Life in general can get wearisome. It can be repetitive and monotonous. Many times we don't see any direct benefit from our labor. If we have young children, we might not see growth or even sprouts from seeds we've planted for years to come. Because of this, it is easy to get weary and wonder if what we're doing is fruitful work.

Daughters, don't grow weary. Weariness seems to be the direct result of delayed results. We wouldn't grow weary if we immediately saw all the effects of our labor. But when we are sowing seeds in little hearts, it takes time to see the fruit.

*“The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop” (Luke 8:15, NIV).*

Do you feel like your work is fruitful? Ask God for the gift of perspective. Remember, you are in this for the long haul. Be patient and faithful. In due time, you will reap a harvest if you don't give up.

MARCH 15

## *Supernatural Patience*

Jesus expects supernatural patience. Give them both cheeks to slap. Give them your shirt and your coat. If they force you to walk one mile, go two. Give to anyone who asks, he tells us in Matthew 5:39-42. Holding ourselves up to this standard, especially as mothers, can make even the most patient moms feel like failures.

Who hasn't lost it when met with disrespect and ingratitude? What do we do? How do we become patient, especially if it's not in our nature? The short answer: we don't. Jesus knows us. He knows this mothering business is hard! Supernatural patience requires supernatural help, and that's why he gives us the Holy Spirit.

*The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23, NLT).*

Think of a recent occurrence where you struggled with—and lost—your patience. What were the triggers? What was the outcome? How did you feel afterward? Lean on the assurance of Galatians 5:22-23, and invite the Spirit to take that burden from you.



MARCH 16

## *The Need to Breathe*

There are days, aren't there, when the walls really do seem to be closing in? Pressed from every side with needs, obligations, expectations, and commitments, you wonder not just how, but if you can keep it all together. When do you get to breathe?

The book of Psalms is filled with such pressures, often in the form of angry armies hoping to kill King David. What was his unfailing response? Prayer. What a wonderful image: a spacious place! Take your pressures to the Lord, and feel them lift; feel your surroundings and your hope expand. Catch your breath with the one gave you life.

*When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD;  
he brought me into a spacious place (Psalm 118:5, NIV).*

Lord, you see the pressures of my everyday life. I want to stop and catch my breath with you in the spacious place. Only in those moments will the stresses lift and peace settle.

MARCH 17

## Delete

Immediately after the moment, we want to hit delete. We want to go back in time just a few minutes when we could feel our blood pressure rising and knew we might say something we'd regret. We knew we might lose control because we just couldn't handle it anymore. We were done.

But the moment comes, we react, and then we apologize: it's the vicious cycle of our humanness. Thankfully, through the blood of Jesus Christ and our repentance, we are forgiven, set free, and released from the burden of our mistakes. We are given a clean slate to start over. Some days that gift feels bigger than other days. Some days, as moms, we rely, heavily, on the grace of our Lord and Savior just to get through the day. And that is okay.

*To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us (Ephesians 1:6-8, NASB).*

Have you wanted to hit "delete" recently? Do you know you are forgiven through the blood of Jesus? Accept his gift; you are forgiven. Forgive yourself and keep moving forward.

MARCH 18

## *Jesus Intercedes*

Do you know that Jesus loves to pray? Praying wasn't a burdensome discipline to Jesus when he walked the earth. He didn't do it because he was told to. He didn't do it because he was trying to fill some quota of time that his local synagogue leader told him needed to be filled. He prayed because he wanted to. He prayed because he knew he had a dad that wanted to hear him.

Jesus prayed for many things when he was on earth. He prayed for his disciples that were before him, but he also prayed for us. What's beautiful is that Jesus is still praying. He is currently sitting nice and close to his Father, and he is talking.

*He is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf (Hebrews 7:25, NLT).*

Can you fathom that Jesus is praying for you? He knows the intricacies of your heart better than you do. He is asking his Father to strengthen and encourage you. If you have ever wondered if anyone out there is praying for you, put that thought to rest. Your wonderful Savior lives continually to make intercession for you.



MARCH 19

## *Our Father in Heaven*

Do we know in the depths of our hearts that our prayers are heard: both the shouting cries for help and the gentle whispers of thanksgiving? He knows our every thought before we even think it. This is the Father that created us. This is the Abba that calls us by name. We are his beloved children.

We need to let the truth sink into the very deepest parts of our hearts and rest there in thanksgiving. His Word is truth, and he tells us time and time again that he will answer our prayer because we trust in him. Whether through song, action, thought, or speech, he delights in hearing our prayers.

*The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,  
and his ears are attentive to their cry (Psalm 34:15, NIV).*

God, it is truly amazing to me that you delight in hearing from me. That you would tune in to what I am saying because you are interested in my heart is something that is hard for me to fathom. What a wonderfully good God you are.

MARCH 20

## *What Would Jesus Do?*

What would Jesus do? The expression may have become a cliché, but the question is the most important one we can teach our children to ask themselves. It only takes a few seconds, but those seconds could change the entire course of their lives.

Would Jesus stand up for the girl being teased? Would Jesus lie about where he was going? Would he take that drink? This world offers endless temptations, and some of it can be a lot of fun—at least in the moment. Whether it's us, a trusted friend, or an intriguing new acquaintance, most children want the opinion of someone for just about every decision they make. Lead them to consult the only source that matters—encourage them to pray!

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart;  
do not depend on your own understanding.  
Seek his will in all you do,  
and he will show you which path to take (Proverbs 3:5-6, NLT).*

This isn't just an issue for children. Moms can easily get caught up in the moment too. God's wisdom is the only true wisdom. Open your heart to God; let him show you the parts you are keeping from him, the decisions you save for yourself. Ask him for the courage to turn everything over to him.

MARCH 21

## *Called to Rest*

One of the most effective things we can do in a day is rest. As moms, our time is pulled in multiple directions constantly, and we are regularly meeting others' needs. God knows, and he masterfully designed you to need rest. If a vehicle has a problem, one of the best people to take the car to would be the engineers who created it. Why? Because they would know every intimate part of the vehicle, and they would quickly be able to diagnose the problem.

God is humankind's designer. If anyone can diagnose our ailments, it's God. And throughout Scripture, he calls us to rest.

*The LORD is like a father to his children,  
tender and compassionate to those who fear him.  
For he knows how weak we are;  
he remembers we are only dust (Psalm 103:13-14, NLT).*

Can you take time to rest today? God knows that you aren't a machine and you weren't meant to run continually. He designed you to stop and recharge. It isn't weakness that makes you tired—it's his design. Tired mom, don't fight him on it. Stop and rest.



MARCH 22

## *Rolled Away*

Most of us know that Jesus was raised from the dead. Whenever we hear it, we know it to be part of the story of Jesus. But have we ever really meditated on the truth of that statement? Jesus was raised from the dead! Certainly he can be trusted with our lives.

Many times we doubt God's love for us. We cast him aside and try to do it all ourselves. We doubt his truth and his healing power. We don't think we can do everything through his strength, yet, in the same breath, we easily accept that Jesus died and rose again. If he can do that, our trials can be overcome!

*When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him" (Mark 16:4, 6, NIV).*

Thank you for the reminder, Jesus, that the stone was rolled away! I believe it, and I believe that all of your promises are true. You love me! I can trust you with all of the details that I have been trying to control.

MARCH 23

## Surrounded by Suffering

Suffering surrounds us. The orphan is scared and hungry; the widow cries at night, her pillow soaked with pain and tears. The mother paces the hospital as her child struggles for breath. The abused hides her scars and braces herself for more. We can't hide from the pain and affliction this world brutally hands out. It is easy to wonder where God is in the midst of all of this suffering.

But we can be confident that he battles without ceasing for the orphan, the widow, the mother, and the abused. We can be assured that he battles with us. We are not alone in our suffering. We are not alone in our pain.

*You keep track of all my sorrows.*

*You have collected all my tears in your bottle.*

*You have recorded each one in your book (Psalm 56:8, NLT).*

In your suffering, do you feel alone, or are you comforted by the presence of God? He feels with you. He keeps track of all your sorrows. He knows every tear that you shed.

MARCH 24

## *A Call to Sinners*

Those unfamiliar with the ins and outs of his ministry might be surprised to learn Jesus spent a lot of time with sinners. Technically, he spent all his time on earth with sinners, since all humans are such. But Jesus actively sought out those considered to be the worst: tax collectors, prostitutes, and others society had written off as unsavory.

Religious leaders were appalled and confused by this. Why would Jesus waste his time on such lost causes, on people who cared little or nothing for the Law?

*When Jesus heard this, he said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.” Then he added, “Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners” (Matthew 9:12-13, NLT).*

The next time you find yourself wondering if you are good enough for Jesus, or deserving of his unconditional love, remember this: he came for you. Flawed, hopeless sinner that you are, he came for you. Share with God how this truth makes you feel, then share it with your children.



MARCH 25

## *Help! I'm Struggling With Sin*

Help! I am struggling with sin too! Has the media age come into your home and plagued you? There have been many teachings and resources developed to protect our children from sinful addictions online. Have we been more diligent with guarding their minds than our own? We aren't alone.

The Bible says sin entangles. Sexual sin seems to get us tangled up fairly quickly. Sometimes it takes a little while to untangle something. It can and will happen with perseverance, but it's imperative that we don't get paralyzed by discouragement.

*God's will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor—not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, NLT).*

Learning to control your body is a process. Complete victory might not happen overnight. Dear child, take heart that God will cleanse and forgive you every time you come to him. In addition to that, he strengthens your resolve to turn away from sin and run to him.

MARCH 26

## *The Morning Cry*

The day dawns cloudy and bleak, but the tasks that lie ahead pay no mind to the weather. The days run together endlessly, and this one promises nothing different. Job, sickness, and financial problems are there waiting in the early hours. It was perhaps on a morning like this, when David cried out to the Lord:

*In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice;  
in the morning I lay my requests before you  
and wait expectantly (Psalm 5:3, NIV).*

What an amazing comfort to know that no matter how gray the moment, it is not our job to fret or figure it out. Rather, we can pour out our need to the Father, lay the burden on him, and go about our business. Waiting is not passive; it's active as we proceed through our day confident of God's faithfulness.

*Listen to my words, LORD, consider my lament.  
Hear my cry for help, my King and my God,  
for to you I pray (Psalm 5:1-2, NIV).*

O Lord, this morning I lift my needs and burdens to you. I rise to meet the day knowing you have heard me and will order my steps.

MARCH 27

## *Not Afraid of Aging*

Aging is part of life. It's funny how the aging process seems to start so slowly and then later in life it gets faster and faster. It would be easy to lose heart if we gauged our aging experience purely by what we saw in the mirror. If we did that, we might begin to fear or hate the aging process.

As we abide with the Lord, aging means we are also maturing. We grow in strength and grace in our knowledge of him. We might not look like we used to, but we also aren't being tossed about. There are many benefits to growing older in Jesus. We are not meant to stay young forever. We are eternal beings that will exist eternally. Because of this, we don't need to despise aging. God is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

*That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day (2 Corinthians 4:16, NLT).*

As I age, God, give me your perspective. The world doesn't do me any favors in this regard. Remind me that maturity is eternally beautiful, and this world is only temporal.



MARCH 28

## *Uncomplicated Freedom*

We over-complicate freedom in the Christian life. Through our legalisms, we try to find a way to humanize the redeeming work of the cross because we simply can't wrap our minds around the supernatural character of God.

It can be hard to understand the complete grace offered at Calvary because we are incapable of giving that kind of grace. But when God says that he has forgotten our sin, and that he has made us new, he really means it. God is love, and love keeps no record of wrongs. Nothing can keep us from his love. Salvation tore the veil that separated us from the holiness of God. That complete work cannot be diminished or erased by anything we do.

*I have swept away your offenses like a cloud,  
your sins like the morning mist. Return to me,  
for I have redeemed you (Isaiah 44:22, NIV).*

Thank you, God, that freedom is truly simple. The beauty of your gospel is summed up in the single concept of grace, undeserved and given without restraint. I accept it today.

MARCH 29

## *Remain in Me*

In John 15, Jesus gives a wonderfully life-giving illustration. He is the vine, God is the vinedresser, and we are the branches. We know that a vinedresser's job is incredibly important. A plant will never bear as much fruit without a vinedresser as it would with one.

God says that the only thing we need to do to bear fruit is to remain in the vine. That is a nice, simple task. If we stay in the vine, he promises to nurture us and sustain us. He also promises to prune us. The pruning isn't for the sake of staying small. It is so we can bear even more fruit.

*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.... I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing"*  
(John 15:1-2, 5, NASB).

If you know the vinedresser has your best interest in mind, it is easier to submit yourself willingly to his pruning. All he asks of you is to remain in him. He will do the rest.

MARCH 30

## *Confident in Our Incompetence*

Whether bringing a brand new baby home from the hospital, giving your first major presentation at work, or simply making your first Thanksgiving meal, there's probably been at least one moment in your life that had you thinking, I have no idea what I'm doing. I'm not qualified. So what did you do? Chances are, you put a smile on your face, dove in, and did your best.

The older we get, the more we realize how truly helpless we are. We also, beautifully, realize it's okay. There is great freedom in admitting our shortcomings and allowing the Father to be our strength. No matter what he asks of us, we are confident in our incompetence. We may not be capable, but God is more than qualified to carry out his plans through us. All we need to do is swallow our pride and let him lead us.

*It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God (2 Corinthians 3:5, NLT).*

Lord God, I want to embrace your competence as my own, so my dreams and my calling can be fulfilled. I swallow my pride and ask you to lead me.



MARCH 31

## Covering Prayer

Jesus' incredible final prayer in the upper room contains his heartfelt requests for his disciples: those present with him at the time and those yet unborn. That's us. Jesus prayed for all who would follow his teaching.

As a mother, it's a prayer worth offering up on behalf of our own children.

*"I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do. Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world" (John 17:15-18, NLT).*

Rewrite this prayer and personalize it for your children. Consider carefully what you are asking of God on their behalf, and thank him for his love and protection.



# APRIL

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I  
who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life  
I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of  
God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

GALATIANS 2:20, ESV



APRIL 1

## *Walking Honorably*

Honor awards are usually given to those who achieve excellence in specific fields. People are honored for their performance in musical, athletic, academic, and professional arenas. Some are honored for their exceptional bravery or intelligence. And rightly so. But if honor is given only for excellent achievement, how on earth can we be considered honorable with our less-than-impressive abilities?

The secret to living a life that honors God is found in depending heavily on his grace to cover us. We keep it simple. We do what we know is right. We don't compromise. We don't chase after the shiny honor awards of the world. And when we get it wrong, we humbly admit our failure, accept God's forgiveness, and keep walking the narrow road.

*The name of the Lord Jesus will be honored because of the way you live, and you will be honored along with him. This is all made possible because of the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:12, NLT).*

God, no honor award is worth seeking after unless it will bring honor to you. I am so human, and you are so perfect, I can't even begin to achieve the excellence standard you require. But by your grace, you have made me able and consider me worthy.



APRIL 2

## Waiting

There's a lot of waiting involved in motherhood. We wait for the first smile, first tooth, first steps...then before we know it, we are waiting for them to cross the stage and get their diplomas. In between? More waiting.

It can be difficult sometimes: waiting for the rest of the world to see the potential or pizzazz we know is there, or waiting for the sound of tires in the driveway long after curfew. Know that God sees it all; he's simply waiting for the right time to execute his plan.

*Humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you (1 Peter 5:6-7, NLT).*

As a mother, what are you waiting for right now? Share your feelings with God. Whether worry, impatience, or even fear, let him comfort you with peace, and assure you he's got it all under control.

APRIL 3

## *His Yoke Is Easy*

Jesus said his yoke is easy. He shared these words with his disciples 2000+ years ago. They knew exactly what he meant because a yoke was regularly used by many of them. But as time has gone on, yokes aren't exactly an everyday household item. Sometimes we need to do a little study on what Jesus' intended meaning was, so we can enjoy his life-giving words.

Animals that worked side by side were linked with a wooden yoke. This yoke was laid across their necks and kept them together. When two animals were linked like this, they were capable of doing much more than what either could do alone. Furthermore, often a weaker or younger animal was linked to a stronger one. This allowed the stronger one to lead the younger and bear more of the weight.

*“My yoke is easy” (Matthew 11:30, ESV).*

Do you feel the weight of responsibility driving you down? When Jesus tells you that his yoke is easy, he is inviting you to enjoy his strength and leadership. While he is calling you to service and work, he will bear the majority of the weight. You only have to walk alongside him.

APRIL 4

## Confidence?

Adventurous Hollywood tales of heroes have little in common with reality, except, perhaps, the hero. Heroes really do exist. They serve us coffee or walk their dogs down our street. Maybe you are a hero. It doesn't take much really, just being in the right place at the right time. And, of course, doing the right thing. This is what sets a hero apart: a hero does the right thing.

Heroes put aside their own desires and interests. They have integrity, which means they do what most wouldn't take the time or effort to do. David's psalm reads like an oath, a decree for heroes everywhere, spoken as a promise to uphold the integrity of God's goodness and righteousness. How can you be a hero? By learning God's commands and keeping them.

*Teach me your decrees, O LORD; I will keep them to the end. Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions; I will put them into practice with all my heart. Make me walk along the path of your commands, for that is where my happiness is found*  
(Psalm 119:33-35, NLT).

Lord, show me what it means to walk with integrity. I submit to walking your path, knowing that you will put me in the right place at the right time. And obedience to you always leads to joy in the end.



APRIL 5

## Those Days

Sometimes by 8:30 a.m. it is easy to feel done. Even though we might have woken up not too long ago, we're tired. Even though we slept eight hours, we're exhausted. We feel sorry for ourselves because of the long day we see before us. Everyone else seemed to wake up on the wrong side of the bed—the very, very wrong side. We wish we could start over. We find ourselves saying to our kids, “We are not having this kind of day,” hoping a definitive statement like that will correct their behavior.

This is when our communion with God can turn us around, change our perspective. It reminds us that this life is the beautiful adventure God gave us. He chose us for this role, to these particular children, knowing we were going to have those kind of days. Sometimes he just wants us to sit, put our hearts at the foot of his cross, and let his peace wash over us.

*Never stop praying (1 Thessalonians 5:17, NLT).*

When do you steal away to spend time with God? Do it even if you have to escape to the bathroom. Whisper to him in the shower. Sing shouts of praise in the car. Find moments to look at your life and realize that you are abundantly blessed, even when you want to be done by 8:30 a.m.

APRIL 6

## *Fitting In*

Has your child ever done something you know they wouldn't normally do in order to fit in or appear a certain way around their friends? Depending on their age, witnessing this may be a daily occurrence in your life, which is painful to watch.

One of the most startling examples in the Bible of this human desire to save face comes from King Herod. Following a performance by his step-daughter at a banquet for many of his friends, Herod promised her anything she wished. His mother persuaded her to ask for the head of John the Baptist (who had offended her by criticizing her marriage to the king) on a platter. Herod knew he shouldn't agree, but he couldn't bear to be seen as a coward or have his promises counted as unreliable in front of his guests.

*The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted and had John beheaded in the prison (Matthew 14:9-10, NIV).*

At what age do we become slaves to the opinions of others? Clearly, ordering a violent death is an extreme example, but the lesson is universal. Spend some time with God asking him to reveal weaknesses in your heart. Ask him to help you teach your children to cling to God over the need to fit in.

APRIL 7

## My First Love

All we need is you, Lord. What can the world offer us that will not perish? What can the world give that can withstand God's refining fire? When we are tested, everything else will fall away. Only our love for him will remain. Our salvation cannot be stolen from us. God's love for us cannot be quenched.

Remember the early days of your walk with Jesus? The way your eyes were opened to understanding, how your heart was broken in love, your arms were lifted in praise, and your knees bent in repentance? God wants that. He misses the desperation you had for him, the focused time you spent in his Word, and the joy you found in prayer. His love for you has not diminished. Can you find your first love again?

*I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first (Revelation 2:3-5, ESV).*

God, I want you to be my first love. I want to remember the love I had for you at first and walk in that love. You are really all I need.



APRIL 8

## *New Mercies*

Did you have a hard day yesterday? Perhaps a hard week? Better yet, are you just in a difficult season? Nothing tests us like mothering. It exposes our weaknesses and sins better than any other role. Be encouraged, dear daughters, we aren't alone. Life isn't easy for anyone. We are all called to take up our cross and follow Jesus.

God doesn't want us to feel defeated though. He wants us to know his infinite and powerful grace. Where we are weak, he is strong. He has new mercy for us each day. Yes, that's right! We may have used up our allotment of mercy yesterday, but there is new mercy available for us today. Every morning, he pours fresh mercy into our hearts. He knows we need it.

*The faithful love of the LORD never ends!*

*His mercies never cease.*

*Great is his faithfulness;*

*his mercies begin afresh each morning*

*(Lamentations 3:22-23, NLT).*

Do you feel like you ask for mercy too often? Today, you can receive all the mercy you need from him. He won't remind you of the mercy you used yesterday. In fact, he expected you to use it. That is precisely why he gives you fresh mercy today.

APRIL 9

## Body of Christ

Looking back in your life, can you name the individuals who were a huge part of your walk with God and your testimony? Can you count the people that have been dear to you—who either shared the gospel with you, or loved and cared for you deeply? Souls who have supported and served alongside you? Friendships that have pointed you towards Christ?

Those people are precious gifts. God blesses us with incredible people to do life with. The body of Christ is a wonderful thing. We don't ever have to be alone.

*Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love (Ephesians 4:15-16, ESV).*

In Christ, you are adopted into a huge, amazing family. Take account of the people God has placed in your life, and thank him for them.

APRIL 10

## New Life

Have you ever laid in bed at night, thinking over past wrongdoings and beating yourself up over decisions you made years ago? If so, you are not alone. We can be incredibly hard on ourselves, asking for near perfection.

There is good news for us all! Once we accept Christ as our Savior, we are made new. There is no need to continue to berate ourselves for the choices of the past. He has washed away our sins and made us clean. We don't have to look at life from our former point of view because our old lives are gone and new ones have begun!

*The LORD is good to all,  
and his mercy is over all that he has made  
(Psalm 145:9, ESV).*

Lord, I release my past to you. Help me forgive myself for past mistakes and realize that you have made me new. I want to walk in this freedom today.



APRIL 11

## *Imperfectly Balanced*

Getting a scale to balance doesn't necessarily mean both sides are evenly weighted. Isn't that a relief? During this season of your life, the "mom" side of your scale is weighed down—heavily. If you also work outside the home, balance can seem permanently out of reach. Your family is your #1 priority, so something, maybe exercise, maybe cleaning bathrooms, maybe pursuing a long-held dream, is hovering out of sight. It's ok. Until the scale crashes, it's in balance.

As long as we remember to seek the Father's guidance, truth, and wisdom, the scale isn't going to crash. Everything that needs to be done will be done. He's got us. We just have to keep our eyes on what's important.

*"My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her"*  
(Luke 10:41-42, NLT).

Do you have an achievable idea of balance? If you feel like Martha, always rushing around trying to get it all done, you are not alone. How can you begin sitting at the feet of Jesus and letting him tell you what's important? What would it take for you to simply enjoy reading another story with your three-year-old without worrying about the un-done dishes? Or studying your Bible without thinking of your to-do list?

APRIL 12

## Light and Warmth

Mothers are a light in their homes. What a privilege it is to give our children Jesus. In everything we do, we should do it for Jesus. Our homes will be warm—a place of refuge for our sweet children—when centered around God. Our children will come to know Jesus through our actions toward them and others. Our character will be a testimony of God's love and grace.

In our homes, our children have the opportunity to grow up knowing and loving Jesus. The world they face is cold and dark, but they will come to know that their homes are a place of security and rest.

*“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.” (Matthew 5:14-15, NIV).*

What does it mean for you to have a Christ-centered home?  
Are you a light in your home?

APRIL 13

## *The Spirit Is Willing*

Lord, I know the right thing to do, but I just don't have the strength to do it. This thought has likely been on our minds more often than we want to admit. We don't like to acknowledge that sometimes we just don't have it in us to make the right choice.

Paul understood the internal conflict that we face in doing right. As new creations in Christ, we have in us the desire to do good; however, as part of a fallen world, we are inherently selfish. In which direction do we position ourselves? We can dwell on our desire to do right, or on our desire to please ourselves. The more we set our minds in the right direction, the easier it will become.

*I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh;  
for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not  
(Romans 7:18, NASB).*

Above all, God, help me remember that it is the enabling power of Christ that I must rely on to continue to make the right decisions; it is through your grace that I can overcome.



APRIL 14

## A New Lens

Some mothers might remember the newborn fog: the time when we're barely sleeping and our days and nights blend together into one long week. We're exhausted, smelly from not having time to shower, and maybe feeling a little out of our element. But, once we are out of that phase, we look back on it and wish we could be there again. Suddenly those foggy moments are fond memories. We forget the smelly days, and the early morning feedings feel like a peaceful dream of cuddling our newborns.

Our perspective shifts as time propels us forward. But how do we gain perspective for where we are? We ask God for a new way to look at something. In doing so, he fills us with peace for our situation.

*For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen (2 Corinthians 4:17-18, NLT).*

Ask God for a change in perspective about a certain situation. He can change your heart in a timely moment, so you can appreciate the season you are in.

APRIL 15

## No Holding Back

God wants wonderful things for you. He wants great things for your children. He has blessing upon blessing stored up just waiting for the right time.

Perhaps we are in a season that feels more like punishment. Maybe we have even begun to doubt his intentions toward us as we struggle with a defiant child, an empty bank account, or a serious illness. We have to trust him without holding back. He wants our whole hearts, and he wants them at a time when it might be hard to give them. But if we do, we let his blessings flow.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:11-13, NIV).*

Whether this is a dark time in your life or one you are certain of his love and provision, know the truth of these verses. Place them somewhere you can see or find them easily, and read them aloud whenever you begin to doubt.



APRIL 16

## *He Is Real*

The test for authenticity is often measured by applying some kind of force or foreign substance to that which is being tested. Determining whether something is made of real gold can be accomplished in a number of ways. Perhaps the most simple is by rubbing the gold on an unglazed ceramic plate. The color of the mark left on the plate determines the authenticity of the gold. Real gold will leave a gold mark. Fake gold will leave a black mark. You can see the analogy, can't you?

At some time in our lives, we will undergo an authenticity test. We might be put through several—daily. What mark will we leave when we encounter those tests? When we brush up against difficulty? If we are authentic Christians, the mark we leave will be gold—the true mark of Christ.

*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:3-4, NIV).*

God, you are real, and you are good. You have given us an example of how to remain authentic in a world full of fraud and deception. Thank you for your great and precious promises. I press on in your strength today.



APRIL 17

## Mourning into Dancing

Grief can look so different for each person, but it all fits into the same heart-wrenching mold of confusion, anger, sadness, and doubt. More often than not, grief surprises us with an upheaval of all we knew to be solid in life. Trusting in a God who loves us unconditionally gets muddled in those moments. Our solid foundation becomes spongy and uncertain.

Hopefully, with the gentle knocks on our hearts to remember his great love for us, the confusion turns into understanding and sadness into joy for the moments we were able to share. Our spongy, doubt-filled mind will cling to the truth that we knew deep in our souls—that God is good and he has a plan for our lives.

*May your unfailing love be my comfort,  
according to your promise to your servant (Psalm 119:76, NIV).*

Have you had a moment of grief where you've doubted God's plan for your life? Be assured that he will comfort you and gently turn your heart back to him. You will laugh again in the morning and find peace in your grief.

APRIL 18

## *Led to Repentance*

Are you discouraged by your child's behavior? Is there continuous rebelling in a certain area? Do you feel like you have tried every discipline under the sun to change them? Perhaps there is another route you can try—the route of kindness.

It is God's kindness that leads us to repentance. Imagine that for a moment. God knows a corrective word spoken in love will produce more than a shouting match. He knows it is his firm but gentle touch, that will bring about a heart change. He is a kind disciplinarian. When we receive and absorb his love, it becomes easier to leave childish ways of sin behind. God knows that we respond much better to kindness than cruelty.

*Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? (Romans 2:4, NASB)*

It is important that however you discipline your child, you do it in kindness. May God grant you the grace to know the difference as you shape the lives he's put before you.

APRIL 19

## *Not Fearful*

Fear rears its ugly head in lots of ways: the spider waiting in your bathtub, the high bridge you pass going to your favorite park, the loud noise outside your bedroom window in the middle of the night. Fear can be gripping, paralyzing, or terrifying for some. For others, it is motivation to conquer weakness.

Jesus' followers had one such worry: what would happen on Judgment Day? Was Jesus' death enough to cover their sins completely and guarantee their eternity in heaven? John points out their fear as one of punishment. But there isn't room for fear alongside perfect love, and if we are abiding in the love of Jesus, then we have perfect love in us. Fear must surrender.

*Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love (1 John 4:18, NLT).*

Jesus, I know I don't need to be fearful of anything because you overcame everything on the cross. I can rest easy in your perfect love, now and for all eternity.



APRIL 20

## True Friendship

One of the best treasures a mother can have is a close friend: a friend she can fully trust and be open with about her daily struggles and battles. Mothers need a confidant with whom they can be real and transparent—on the best days and on the worst. A mother needs a friend who will pray for her, support her, and rejoice with her when she conquers whatever she is struggling with.

Keeping all of our struggles inside is terribly destructive. The enemy wants us to agonize over our temptations and weaknesses alone. He wants us to feel defeated and lost. He wants to destroy us. God wants us to support each other in the messiest parts of our lives, and the only way we can do that is by letting a friend in.

*Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results (James 5:16, NLT).*

If you struggle with anger, selfishness, or the like, confiding in a friend will bring bright light and healing. Do you have a close friend to share your heart with? Seek her out today.

APRIL 21

## *That Person*

Do you have your person? The friend who you go to at two in the morning when you need to talk? Do you have that girlfriend who knows your very worst and loves you for it?

Jesus had a lot of friends in his followers. He told them frequently that he loved them, that they were meant to be his people. He was open and genuine when they disappointed him or when he expected more. He forgave easily. These are all things that we women desire in our relationships. We need to cling to those intimate friends tightly and thank them often.

*“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends”  
(John 15:13, NLT).*

Are you open enough to let others in on your life? If you’re still looking for your two-in-the-morning friend, make sure you’re being open and vulnerable with others, and they will likely do the same. It isn’t always easy to expose your weakness, but the reward is great.

APRIL 22

## *Finding Contentment*

The key to unlocking contentment amidst the trials is in trusting that your needs have been met. Trust eliminates the spectrum between “life is good” and “life is bad.” With trust, all life lived in the strength of Jesus is contentment. All life is satisfaction. Everything is a fulfillment of his promise that following him gives us just what we need.

Contentment grows in the midst of growing discomfort. Joy is found despite the trouble around every corner. A life of faith prospers amid the ruins. Comfort is found when you trust in your Father for everything. We don’t need the trappings and the shimmer of the temporary. Whether we have everything or nothing, we trade it all for the eternal.

*I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need (Philippians 4:11-12, ESV).*

God, strengthen me to endure the worldly wanderings for the hope and promise of my eternal existence. I believe that you will meet my every need. I believe you for contentment today.



APRIL 23

## *Depending on God*

Death and taxes. They say those are the two things we can depend on in life. Of course they don't mention the neighbor who fails to return the cordless drill (again), the empty fuel light blinking when you're late for work (again), and the spontaneous yet cheerful visitor ringing the doorbell when you're still in your pajamas at 3pm (again). Unpredictability is something else we can depend on!

Through every unpredictable situation, through all disappointments, delays, and disruptions, we can cling even more confidently to the faithfulness of God. He is the one solid rock on which we can firmly stand. He is steadfast and loyal, asking us to trust in his promises. God commands that we not be afraid or terrified; if it weren't possible, he wouldn't ask it of us. He guarantees that he will always be with us, no matter where we go. If it weren't true, he wouldn't promise it.

*“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified... for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6, NIV).*

Thank you, Lord, that when life is unpredictable, I can still depend on you. You are always near me. Help me cling to you when everything else is shaking.

APRIL 24

## My Confidence

In times of war, army strategists benefit from high vantage points. Looking upon the battlefield from above is the best way to formulate strategies for their troops. Before the use of satellite equipment and heat-sensing radar, views were limited to ground level, forcing strategists to use whatever maps and spies they could to predict enemy movement and position their men.

In the same way, our lives benefit from a higher viewpoint. When we rise above our circumstances and see life not from our own anxious, urgent, overwhelming perspective but from God's, life's battles become less intimidating as eternity's promises rise into view.

*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9, ESV).*

God, I know you have a plan for my life, but sometimes it is hard to see. Help me to confidently lift my head above the fray, and believe that you will lead me safely to victory.

APRIL 25

## *A Lifestyle of Prayer*

Depending on the type of person you are, you may not be very good at asking for help. There are those who like to be the *helpers*: they do best serving others because they feel capable and useful. Then there are those who gladly accept service any time they are given the opportunity. Neither is better than the other, and both have their positive elements.

In different seasons of life, natural helpers may need to be the ones receiving help. Sometimes this is hard to accept, and we have to be careful not to let pride take control. Asking for help is part of being vulnerable: we push everything aside to say, “I can’t do this alone.” God has put capable people in our lives who love to help, but they won’t know we need help until we ask.

*I look up to the hills,  
but where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth (Psalm 121:1-3, NCV).*

Can you easily ask for help? God asks you to take a chance on the people he’s intricately placed in your life. You’ll be amazed at how much stronger you feel when you’re leaning on those who want to carry the load with you.



APRIL 26

## Risk Taker

There will be opportunities that arise that might be surprising to us. We might suddenly be presented with something that feels kind of terrifying. We view it as an opportunity because we see the benefit in it somewhere along the way. We understand that it could be as much of a gift to our lives as a potentially difficult ride or transition before the gift appears.

Stepping through the unknown takes courage, and courage isn't always readily available. Through the power of prayer, and wrestling with the opportunity's positives and negatives, hopefully we come to the point where our hearts feel the peace we've been looking for. That makes the task of accepting the opportunity much easier.

*Your word is a lamp to guide my feet  
and a light for my path (Psalm 119:105, NLT).*

Have you taken a risk and been pleasantly surprised by the outcome? How do you fully give your trust to God? You still might not feel brave about a decision, but you can trust the peace in your heart. That alone takes courage. This opportunity might be one of the biggest surprises of your life; it's wonderful and scary, but perfect for you.

APRIL 27

## Stay the Course

Runners are human beings that have honed the evasive skill of self-control. They have the willpower to overcome physical pain and exhaustion. They have the stamina to push past throbbing muscles, breathlessness, and lead feet. They have the ability to follow through with the plan. So they do.

Running this race is the greatest challenge of your life. It requires self-control, motivation, and stamina. It requires submission to the training: saying yes every day to getting dressed, lacing up your shoes, and staying on the course. Determine to run the race so that you will win!

*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. (1 Corinthians 9:24-25, NIV).*

God, help me see life through your eyes. Let that motivate me to stay on course. Keep away the things which hinder me from putting my running shoes on and hitting the track.

APRIL 28

## *Calm My Heart*

When the hospital doors slide open and we aren't sure what news will greet us, God is compassionate. When the boss calls us for a meeting and dismissal is a real possibility, God is gentle. When we return home late at night to find our personal treasures stolen or destroyed, God is comforting. He cares so deeply for us.

Some see God as distant, vengeful, or condemning. Others see God as kind, affectionate, and attentive. Sometimes circumstances become too overwhelming. Mountains of anxiety rise up and we feel isolated and alone. Let no doubt take root; he is a God who cares deeply, loves fully, and remains faithful, ever at our side in times of trouble. Though our sorrows overwhelm us, he is the comfort that we need.

*When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up—the flames will not consume you (Isaiah 43:2, TLB).*

God, I choose to take your hand, offered in love, and receive your comforting touch. I remember your faithfulness. Let it calm my heart. You are with me, and I will not drown or be consumed by fire. I cling to your promises today.



APRIL 29

## Constant in Change

It takes time to adjust to change. Sailors need time to get their “sea legs,” mountain climbers rest to adjust their lungs to altitude changes, and scuba divers surface slowly to regulate pressure. Even adjusting to daylight-savings can take time.

During their time with Jesus, the disciples had to adjust quickly to radical situations. A daughter was raised from the dead, a boy's meager lunch multiplied, a demon was cast into a herd of pigs that threw themselves off a cliff. Could they have woken up in the morning and sufficiently prepared for such things? It seems as though the disciples never really adjusted to the unpredictability of life with Jesus. Have you?

*A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”*

*He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” (Mark 4:37-40, NIV)*

Father God, no matter what changes I am facing, I can walk confidently when you are with me. You are prepared for everything; you are steady in the storm and you will not leave me to drown.

APRIL 30

## Being Courageous

Courage is often associated with acts of bravery that defy typical human experience: running through flames to save a child, jumping in a raging river to pull someone to shore, or chasing down a thief to retrieve a stolen purse. But courage doesn't always look so heroic. Courage is standing your ground when you feel like running; it's saying yes to something you feel God is telling you to do even when you aren't sure that you can do it.

Courage can be telling someone you don't want to hear their negative thoughts about other people. It can be sharing your testimony with a room full of people... or with one. Sometimes it takes courage just to leave your house. When we place our trust and hope in God, he will give us the courage we need to do the tasks he wants us to do. If that includes doing something heroic, great! But let's not underestimate the importance of walking courageously in the small things as well.

*May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things our faith prompts you to do (2 Thessalonians 1:11, NLT).*

Lord, so many things in life require me walking courageously. Some small, and some heroic. Give me the courage I need to get through each situation, so I can bring glory to your name.





# MAY

“Be strong! Be courageous! Do not be afraid  
of them! For the Lord your God will be with  
you. He will neither fail you nor forsake you.”

DEUTERONOMY 31:6, TLB





MAY 1

## *My Deliverer*

God loves us with a sacrificial love that escapes our human understanding, overwhelms our human selfishness, and humbles our human pride. Through the sacrifice of his only Son, Jesus Christ, mankind is delivered from the fate of eternal separation from God.

When we are separated, bowed low and desperate, he hears our cry. When we are forgotten and despairing, he comforts our loneliness. And when, because of our own sin, we are wicked and depraved, he cleanses us of our offensiveness and makes us suitable for glory.

*I waited patiently for the LORD;  
he turned to me and heard my cry (Psalm 40:1, NIV).*

Thank you, Lord, for hearing me and coming to my rescue. You have delivered me. You keep me steady and safe. Let the song in my heart be a message to many today.

MAY 2

## Shifting Priorities

When we become mothers, life naturally changes. And so do the relationships around us. Our friendships tend to shift and take a backseat to the little family we are knitting. We become inwardly involved and focused. It takes a more concentrated effort to pour into our friends. Time is limited, our energy is drained, and our priorities have changed. But good friendships are worth fighting for.

Friends are valuable. Mothering with the support of people that love and care for us is priceless. We need each other.

*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God (1 Peter 4:9-11, NIV).*

Consider how you love the people in your life. Do you make time for close friends? Open up your home (even if it is messy), serve and encourage them in the journey, be a shoulder to cry on, or the friend to confide in. Love deeply.

MAY 3

## *The Busy Bee*

We seem to think that the busier we are, the better we are. The more activities our kids are in, the better we are equipping them for whatever is to come. Busyness doesn't mean we are better. But it isn't bad to be busy either—as long as we don't have the perspective that the fullness of our lives is determined by how busy we are.

Jesus spent a lot of time in relationship with others. His busy was different than ours. There is so much fullness to be had in quiet evenings at home with your family, a Saturday morning with nothing to do but make pancakes and stay in pajamas, a long walk outside with our kids, or coffee with a friend. Let's not put busy on a pedestal; it has a proper place in life—just not the top rung.

*The LORD is good to those who depend on him,  
to those who search for him.  
So it is good to wait quietly  
for salvation from the LORD.  
And it is good for people to submit at an early age  
to the yoke of his discipline:  
Let them sit alone in silence  
beneath the LORD's demands (Lamentations 3:25-28, NLT).*

Do you have a full calendar? Slow down. Enjoy the journey.



MAY 4

## *Unmatched Faithfulness*

Few love stories demonstrate a higher level of faith than that depicted by the life of Hosea the prophet. He was given what seemed to be a very unfair task—to take a prostitute as a wife and commit to loving her. He would watch as his wife and the mother of his children chose to leave the family and return to her old ways. But it didn't end there. Hosea went in search of his wife, and finding her in her debauchery, he paid to bring her home with him—guilty, broken, and dirty. It would seem a romantic tale of undying love had it happened naturally. However, it is even more inconceivable when considering that Hosea walked in knowing what would happen.

It sounds oddly familiar, doesn't it? Jesus, commissioned by the Father, pursued us until we decided to become his. But we just can't seem to keep ourselves out of the mess of this world. Jesus doesn't quit. The price he paid to restore our relationship was his life. He gave up everything to bring us home. That's faithfulness in its fullest measure.

*Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,  
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies (Psalm 36:5, NASB).*

God, help me not to measure your faithfulness by my lack of it. Yours cannot be exhausted. I choose to believe that you continue to love me in spite of my failures.

MAY 5

## God's Gentle Discipline

As mothers, a crucial part of our role is administering discipline. Because of our diverse backgrounds, that word can evoke a range of emotions. Some received discipline from a loving parent, and while not always perfect, they knew they were being disciplined for their good. For others though, *discipline* might represent cruelty or abuse.

Discipline, as God intends it, is a direct act of love. It is not motivated by a burst of anger or a vengeful heart. Its motivation is for the recipient's own well-being. God disciplines us for our own good using the gentlest means possible to provoke the greatest change. We shouldn't be shocked when our children sin and rebel. It is their nature. But that is also the very reason we cannot let their sin go unnoticed.

*"The Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child" (Hebrews 12:6, NLT).*

God calls you to lovingly correct your children so they begin to choose differently. Remember, you aren't *hurting* them—you are *loving* them. God disciplines those he loves.

MAY 6

## Childlike Humility

Jesus loved kids. He even told his disciples that only those who made themselves childlike would enter the kingdom of heaven. What was it about little children that Jesus found so appealing?

Think about toddlers. How trusting are they? How concerned with the opinions of others? The amusing “me do it” declarations of a two-year-old aside, we rarely meet children who don’t recognize their absolute dependence on others.

*“Anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf is welcoming me” (Matthew 18:4-5, NLT).*

In what ways do you need to become more childlike? What lessons could you learn by watching and imitating your kids? Spend some time with God on this. Ask him to help you help your children retain their humility and trust.



MAY 7

## *Perfect Friend*

God created you for relationship with him just as he created Adam and Eve. He delights in your voice, your laughter, and your ideas. He longs to fellowship with you. When life gets difficult, do you run to him with your frustrations? When you're overwhelmed with sadness or grief, do you carry your pain to him? In the heat of anger or frustration, do you call on him for freedom? He is a friend that offers all of this to us—and more—in mercy and love. He is worthy of our friendship.

The friendship he offers to us is a gift of immeasurable worth. There is no one like him; indeed, there is none as worthy of our fellowship than God Almighty, our Maker and Redeemer. Train your heart to run first to God with your pain, joy, frustration, and excitement. His friendship will never let you down!

*“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me” (Revelation 3:20, NIV).*

God, you are the perfect friend. If I think of all I need in a friendship, I know that I can find it in you. Thank you that your friendship surpasses all of my expectations.

MAY 8

## Serious Boldness

Kids learn most of their bad behavior from us. When we see a child in public throwing a tantrum until her bedraggled mother gives in and buys her the object of her desire, we either cringe at the thought of our own children behaving that way, recall a time or times they have, or think, I can't believe she gave in! No wonder the child acts like that!

The third response is dangerous if we find ourselves passing judgment, but there is also a crucial lesson embedded in this reaction. We have a God-given responsibility to teach our kids how to behave appropriately. When we reward, encourage, or model wrong behavior, we are essentially causing them to sin. How much do you think this matters to God?

*“If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea” (Matthew 18:6, NIV).*

How does this verse affect you? Ask God if you are taking your responsibility to lead your children down the right path as seriously as he requires. Keep in mind his unconditional love and forgiveness as he reveals things to you. Thank him for the mercy of each new day.

MAY 9

## *Hiding Away*

How many times have you locked yourself in your room to hide momentarily from the noise, the chaos, and the constant demands of motherhood? It feels good to escape, catch your breath, and regain a measure of sanity.

Hiding is not always an option when you are needed so much. Besides, little ones have a knack for finding you in those moments. Next time motherhood overwhelms you, hide away with God's Word (and perhaps some well-deserved chocolate). He will give you the rest you need. He knows that sometimes all you need is to get away, and he welcomes you.

*You are my refuge and my shield;  
your word is my source of hope (Psalm 119:114, NLT).*

What aspects of motherhood seem to overwhelm you the most? God is your escape. In his hiding place he will strengthen you and renew your hope. Take some time to hide away with the Lord today.



MAY 10

## Healer

The woman in the crowd had suffered for more than a decade. All of her money had been spent on doctors, but instead of finding healing she was worse than ever. She had one hope, and she reached for it as Jesus passed by her in the crowd. She believed that just a touch, not even from his holy hand but from his garment alone, would bring the healing she desired. In his brief but blessed response, we hear Jesus' heart for his ailing child: Daughter, I love your faith! You came to the right place for healing; I know everything about you and the pain you have suffered. Because you have believed in my love for you, you are healed! Be at peace.

Often, we become fixated on doctoring our own wounds so we can make it through the day. They may be physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual and we may have tried every possible means to treat them. Why not turn instead to the one who can fully repair us?

*“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction” (Mark 5:34, NASB).*

Father, you know my burdens. I believe that you are good, and you can heal me. I put my faith in you and ask you to make me whole.

MAY 11

## *The Label Game*

It is so easy to become caught up in a world of stuff: the kind of car we drive, the house we live in, and what schools our kids go to label us as certain people. If we can't achieve those things, we quickly become discouraged and discontent. We feel that life is unfair, and we are somehow below others because we don't have the right stuff.

Jesus tells us something entirely different. He encourages us to set our minds on things that are above (Colossians 3:2). That life he promises us in heaven is the one that matters most.

*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever (1 John 2:15-17, NIV).*

How have labels affected your life? How can you teach your children not to set their hearts on things of this earth? Do you understand that you matter to God, not your stuff?

MAY 12

## Standing Firm

As mothers, there are countless decisions we make every day. Some decisions are easier than others—we make judgment calls on bedtime, discipline, extracurricular activities, sleepovers, curfews, parties, friends, boyfriends, and the list goes on. There are many grey areas in parenting, and we have to make decisions, clothed in prayer, based on each child.

Then there are the black-and-white decisions: the ones where we clearly know what is right according to God's law. In those times, our decisions may not be favorable or received well by our children. We may feel pressured to bend the rules to keep harmony or to save face, but God calls us to stand firm for him in those moments.

*My dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV).*

When you are confident of what God's will is, how do you choose to stay firm in your decisions even when your children, or others, plead with you to change your mind? You are parenting for his purpose. Do not bend according to the world.



MAY 13

## *He Knows Me by Name*

There may be thousands of people with your name, or there might just be a handful. Either way, it makes no difference to God. He doesn't take a stab in the dark when you are approaching him, guessing a name and hoping he gets it right. He knows exactly who you are and why you are coming to him. He knows why you've stayed away for so long. He knows your deepest need, your most painful wound, and your darkest thoughts. And still he loves you.

*Lord, you know everything there is to know about me. You've examined my innermost being With your loving gaze. You perceive every movement of my heart and soul, And understand my every thought Before it even enters my mind. You are so intimately aware of me, Lord, You read my heart like an open book And you know all the words I'm about to speak Before I even start a sentence! You know every step I will take, Before my journey even begins!*  
(Psalm 139:1-4, TPT)

Father God, you really do know me. And in knowin you still love me. Thank you for your heart toward me. His Kindness

MAY 14

## Role Models

Children imitate what they see; it's how they learn to operate in this big world. Being a role model is a huge responsibility, and the scary thing is, you are one—all the time—whether you want to be or not. No matter how old or how young, you can be sure of one thing: your kids are watching you. At first, every child wants to be just like Mommy or just like Daddy. Who hasn't caught a little boy or girl with a tool in hand ready to "fix" something, or with lipstick smeared all over their faces?

As time passes, children become more selective about what they adopt. Our optimism and friendliness? Absolutely. Our critical spirit? Not so much. The key to being a good role model is mostly to remember that we are role models. It's how God planned things.

*"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16, NIV).*

What are you modeling to your children right now? Are they seeing the light you want them to see? How could you shine more brightly today?

MAY 15

## *Cultivating Love*

Does your love for your children, or one particular child, feel weak? All relationships require tune-ups. They require time and effort. If we don't connect with people on a heart-level, we can't expect to feel deep emotion toward them the moment they walk in the room. We have to intentionally steward our minds and invest quality time into relationships to stir emotion.

If we operate simply as our children's maid, we can start to resent them and their needs. It's important to invest quality time in their lives and find ways to relate to them on their level. Depending on their age, it might require some video game playing, reading the same book 100 times, precariously hiking into their beloved tree house, or watching a sport we care little about. We have to remember that love is kind.

*Love is patient, love is kind (1 Corinthians 13:4, NASB).*

Do you need to spend some extra special time with your children right now? Your love for your child will increase as you step out of your normal duties and play with them. In turn, this will empower you to go back to serving them out of generosity.



MAY 16

## *His Kindness*

Holding hands is a beautiful act when done in love. We might hold hands with a child to cross the street, to help an aging stranger off of the bus, or to embrace even the smallest part of our beloved while strolling through the park. We grasp hands for a moment, and give safety, kindness, or affection through the simple act.

Can you imagine that God's hand in this same act is extended to those who put their faith in him? Surely his sons and daughters need the spiritual comfort, guidance, and fellowship of God's hand more than any other. And we can be certain that God delights in extending his hand to us as well.

*The LORD directs the steps of the godly.  
He delights in every detail of their lives.  
Though they stumble, they will never fall,  
for the LORD holds them by the hand (Psalm 37:23-24, NLT).*

Father, I take comfort in your kindness. You lead me rightly. I cannot fall when I follow your lead because your loving grip will never let me go.

MAY 17

## *In the Judge's Seat*

“She pulled my hair!”

“He took my toy!”

“She won’t get out of my room!”

Parenting, whether we like it or not, often puts us in the judge’s seat. We are called to train, teach, love, and discipline our children. Our desire is for them to know and love God. It can be completely overwhelming at times, and tempting to parent out of anger or frustration. But our children need to be taught the ways of the Lord. They need to know his kindness and mercy. The best way to teach them is to lead by example.

God gives us clear instructions on how to parent: don’t favor one child over another, be fair, be a giver of mercy. We all make mistakes and our children are just learning. We need to be humble about our own walk with Jesus.

*He has told you, O man, what is good;  
And what does the Lord require of you  
But to do justice, to love kindness,  
And to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8, NASB)*

In what ways can you show your children God’s kindness and mercy? Your children don’t need a perfect mother—so it won’t do them any good pretending you are. Opening up and being apologetic when you make mistakes has such a positive impact on your children’s hearts.

MAY 18

## *Crave the Spirit*

To explain how desperately we should want to know more of God, Peter uses the metaphor of a newborn. Whether you have an infant in your arms right now, or whether those days are many years behind you, close your eyes and go back to that time when the only thing in the world that mattered to your child was to be held in your arms—and fed. Think of that angry, purple little face when you took too long to satisfy their hunger, and the almost greedy relief with which they ate once they could.

According to Peter, that is the level of desire—of need—we should bring to our relationship with God.

*Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness (1 Peter 2:2-3, NLT).*

How would you describe your craving for God: for his Word, his Spirit, his grace? Ask him to open your heart to wanting more and more of him, and less and less of everything else.



MAY 19

## My Peace

Peace is much-desired but often elusive. Just when we seem to be getting life under control, a new disaster strikes. Just when we find enough calm to settle our minds, a bigger calamity arises. Or worse, the waves of difficulty come one after another with no end in sight. Will there ever be an end to our conflicts? Why does peace elude us?

We find everything we need when we look to God's Word. The peace begged for on bumper stickers will always elude the world; the peace of Jesus Christ is the only lasting peace that we can attain while walking this earth. Because he knew our weak flesh, Jesus promised us a path to his peace even in this world of struggle—our Advocate, the Holy Spirit.

*"The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:26-27, NIV).*

Jesus, I need your peace. When my heart is troubled and afraid, only you can give me the peace I truly need—the peace you promised to us so long ago, knowing we would need it.

MAY 20

## Strong Love

It seems there are few passages in the Bible more potent than 1 Corinthians 13. Unfortunately, we hardly listen to the words because we've heard them so many times. It is critical that we are filled with God's love, so we are able to love the children he has given us. His strong love filling our hearts will remove insecurities and self-love so that we can love our children like he does.

God says love does not insist on its own way. He loves us in a way that seeks to serve, and he calls us to love others in the same way. Love is humble, gentle, and protective. When conflict arises in our homes, God calls us to lead our children by loving them. When they are led by love, they will be more apt to respond favorably.

*[Love] does not demand its own way (1 Corinthians 13:5, NLT).*

Ask God to remove from your heart any calluses related to his simple but profound words. Receive his selfless, strong love today so you can show the same to your children.

MAY 21

## *Greatness of Love*

In the moment we hold our newborn for the first time, a new kind of love washes over us and we get a glimpse of how God loves us. Holding that precious baby is overwhelming and wonderful. We feel at a degree that we have never felt before. It is impossible to define or measure—or contain our emotions.

We have the ability to love to such a degree only because God first loved us. He loved us so we could love him and love others. Without him we couldn't know the greatness of love.

*We love because he first loved us (1 John 4:19, NIV).*

Do you know how much you are loved?



MAY 22

## Provision

Pull up to the drive-through, place an order for the coffee that will help start the day, and hear the cashier's words, "Your order was paid for by the car in front of you." This unexpected generosity gives birth to humbling gratitude, and the day is now overcome with God's presence. A stranger may have been the instrument of kind provision, but the inspiration is unmistakable.

God is the author of generosity, providing us with all we need. Look at all he gave to Adam and Eve, and how little he asked for in return! They walked in his presence daily, enjoying authentic relationship with their Father. Even when they ate what they knew they shouldn't, God provided atonement for them.

*Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory (Romans 5:2, NLT).*

God, I know I have sinned and deserve death. Thank you for Christ, my substantial provision! You bless me each and every day, whether I acknowledge it or not. You work your love out for me in generous portions! I am so grateful for your generosity.

MAY 23

## *A Lonely Place to Live*

Sometimes in our own stubbornness and pride we try to do everything on our own. We buy into the lie that we don't need anyone: not the church, not friends, not even God. Usually this attitude is driven by fear or perhaps past hurt and disappointment. We push away everyone who wants to love and help us. It doesn't really work out for us in the end though. God created in us a need for him and a need for others. Even if we are successful in our own pursuits, pride isolates us from God and others. That is a lonely place to live.

If we lay aside our pride and past fears, we are able to commune with others, deeply benefiting from the joy of living together.

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, NIV).*

What are some things you are trying to do on your own? Can you see how allowing someone to help can be a blessing to both of you?

MAY 24

## *The Call for Help*

Depending on the type of person you are, you may not be very good at asking for help. There are those who like to be the helpers: they do best serving others because they feel capable and useful. Then there are those who gladly accept service any time they are given the opportunity. Neither is better than the other, and both have their positive elements.

In different seasons of life, natural helpers may need to be the ones receiving help. Sometimes this is hard to accept, and we have to be careful not to let pride take control. Asking for help is part of being vulnerable: we push everything aside to say, "I can't do this alone." God has put capable people in our lives who love to help, but they won't know we need help until we ask.

*I look up to the hills,  
but where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth (Psalm 121:1-3, NCV).*

Can you easily ask for help? God asks you to take a chance on the people he's intricately placed in your life. You'll be amazed at how much stronger you feel when you're leaning on those who want to carry the load with you.



MAY 25

## *Refreshed in His Presence*

Sin is exhausting. It kills us from the inside out. We cannot live an abundant life in Christ while still pursuing a life of sin. The beauty about salvation and the grace of our God is that all we have to do is return to him in repentance and our sin will be erased.

As we walk away from our sin and return to God, we find refreshment and restoration. We will be given grace to walk forward in forgiveness, and be clothed with power to continue in a life of righteousness and strength to resist future temptations. His blood will cleanse us, his grace will renew us, his power will restore us, and his presence will refresh us.

*Repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19, NASB).*

Heavenly Father, search my heart and convict me of any sin that is causing weariness in my spirit. Cleanse and erase the sin from my life. Bring your refreshing to my soul so I can live the grace-filled life that you desire for me. Thank you for your cleansing and for your love.

MAY 26

## Chosen for This

Have you ever watched another family and then looked at your own with a completely different lens? Suddenly, the kids you labeled as having personality are now disasters. Nothing can make us diagnose our families worse than comparing them to another family. The behaviors we are now irritated by, we want to correct. The personalities we thought were so cute and refreshing, we want to change. The lies that the enemy wants us to believe start to pile up.

We have to be able to ignore those lies and lean on the truth. If our inner critics are getting the best of us, we can step back into God's grace. Remember, he didn't make a mistake in giving these children to us. He chose us for them. That should help us shift our perspective.

*"For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just" (Genesis 18:19, NIV).*

Is there another family that you constantly compare yours to? Take another look at your family and see that they are perfectly yours. You are the best mother for them, and you can do a great job if you let God be your guide.

MAY 27

## *She Who Has Believed*

Promise is often what keeps us going. We need something to look forward to—a banner to hold up and a finish line to run toward. When we begin to lose faith that we will reach that finish line, or when we start to doubt that the dream will ever come true, that is when we falter and begin to lose our way.

There is so much power in our belief. Think about those in Scripture to whom Jesus said, “Your faith has made you well.” God has always rewarded a believing heart. He is glorified in the faith of his children and in their trust in his promises. Don’t lose sight of what he has promised you. Believe that he will fulfill it no matter how unlikely it seems to you. He will not forget you. And he will bless you for your unwavering faith in him.

*“Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!” (Luke 1:45, NIV)*

God, help me to always believe that you will bring to pass the dreams you’ve given me. I desire your blessing, and I want to be known as one who never lost faith in your promise.



MAY 28

## Generosity of Time

Sometimes it is easier to be generous with our money than our time. Life is usually so busy that we tend to guard our time religiously. Often we get so focused on ourselves and our own to-do list that we fail to notice the needs around us. Perhaps a friend could use a phone call, or an elderly neighbor help with planting her garden. Maybe volunteer hours could be a blessing to your child's teacher, or someone at church who needs help moving.

We are called to be the hands and feet of Christ. There are so many opportunities to serve others around us, and there are such blessings to be found when we do.

*Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7, NIV).*

Sometimes giving of yourself is more valuable than a hastily written check. God loves a cheerful giver. Be that cheerful giver, even if it means laying aside your own needs or schedule. Think about how you could bless someone with your time.

MAY 29

## *A Sad Day*

Even the most blessed of mothers—with the most angelic babies, the most obedient and over-achieving children, and the most doting and helpful friends—will occasionally have a day of inexplicable sadness.

When those days come, and if counting our blessings doesn't take away the ache, we can consider this: as beautiful as our lives are, there is still something better to come. This is not our home. Perhaps we are missing our Father.

*Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God (Psalm 42:11, NIV).*

What is your typical response to the unexplained ache that sometimes comes upon your otherwise happy heart? Do you find yourself feeling ungrateful or even guilty on a “sad day”? Turn to God, allow yourself to feel low, and thank him for the reminder that he is the only one who can truly satisfy you.

MAY 30

## Righteousness Poured Out

A day will come when we see our Savior face-to-face. We will dwell in the light of his presence for eternity. But for right now, here on this earth, we are in a season of seeking him and of preparing our hearts for his coming glory.

When we plant righteousness in our lives, we will reap the harvest of the unfailing love of Christ. We open the door to every one of the blessings he has for us when we simply open our hearts to him. And we cannot plant righteousness if there is any ground in our hearts that isn't soft and ready. By daily coming before him, bowing our knee, examining our hearts, and allowing him to water our souls with his Word, we will be softened by his love.

*Sow righteousness for yourselves,  
reap the fruit of unfailing love,  
and break up your unplowed ground;  
for it is time to seek the LORD,  
until he comes and showers his righteousness on you  
(Hosea 10:12, NIV).*

God, I need your presence so desperately in my life. I thank you that I can stand in your presence here and now. Soften any hard ground in my heart so that I can be ready to receive all that you have for me.



MAY 31

## Something New

God never causes pain without purpose. He doesn't allow us to weather a season of loss and destruction in our lives without preparing a place of peaceful restoration on the other side.

If you are enduring a season of struggle, hold on to the promise that something new is being born out of your trial. And no matter how painful the process, or how much you feel like there's no way anything could be worth this difficulty, know that your heavenly Father sees everything you're going through and he will bring you new birth.

*"In the same way I will not cause pain without allowing something new to be born," says the LORD. "If I cause you the pain, I will not stop you from giving birth to your new nation," says your God (Isaiah 66:9, NCV).*

Thank you, Jesus, that you see my pain. Thank you that you promise not to allow pain without something new being born in my life. You are a God who restores, re-creates, and establishes his people. Help me to trust you even in my seasons of pain.



# JUNE

Take delight in the LORD,  
and he will give you your heart's desires.  
Commit everything you do to the LORD.  
Trust him, and he will help you.

PSALM 37:4-5, NLT



JUNE 1

## The King

Picture a beautiful white castle perched on a mountain top overlooking a crystal-clear lake. High walls, a watchtower, and open parapets ensure maximum protection from enemy forces. Inside, vaulted ceilings above sprawling staircases. Ornate sculptures and paintings grace the walls. Then, the King appears. For a moment, you tremble. Then, as he advances toward you with arms wide open, you remember. This is my Daddy. And this is my home. You run into those arms, and lose yourself in his warm embrace.

It sounds like a fairytale, but that picture doesn't even do justice to the home or the Father awaiting us. Gold, silver, sparkling jewels, decadence, opulence, splendor, immeasurable love, joy, peace, and unbroken relationship—it's our inheritance! That means we are royalty.

*So that we would know for sure that we are his true children, God released the Spirit of Sonship into our hearts—moving us to cry out intimately, “My Father! You’re our true Father!” Now we’re no longer living like slaves under the law, but we enjoy being God’s very own sons and daughters! And because we’re his, we can access everything our Father has (Galatians 4:6-7, TPT).*

Father, thank you for the inheritance I have as your child. This life has plenty of trouble and suffering, but the promise of eternity with you, my majestic King, is more than worth it!



JUNE 2

## Love Like Jesus

Jesus showed his love for us by making the ultimate sacrifice. Before that, he made a million other little sacrifices.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus' only need was to do the will of the Father, and the Father's will was that he loved: unselfishly, unreservedly, unwaveringly. His final command to the Apostles? Love. Love like I love you. The first part is easy; the second part may require a bit more work, and a lot more prayer.

*"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35, NIV).*

Most of the time, it's easy to love your children. But do you love them like Jesus commands? What steps can you take to truly love like Jesus, not just with your kids but in every part of your life?

JUNE 3

## Scriptural Advice

Paul often writes to the churches he mentored as if they are his children, and much of the advice he gives them is useful for mothers. Today, let this passage from 1 Thessalonians encourage and guide our parenting:

*Warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people. Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:14-18, NLT).*

Which piece of Paul's counsel most speaks to you as a mother? Which would be the most difficult to live out? Share your heart with your Father.

JUNE 4

## Security Blanket

Have you ever spent hours—or minutes that seemed like hours—searching frantically for Blankie, Paci, or Lambie in an attempt to quiet the inconsolable child sprawled on the floor? Ah, that wonderful security item. The magic silencer. The instant peace maker. As kids grow older, we try to wean them off those security items: the blankets that are torn to shreds, the teddy bears with missing eyes, or the pacifiers that are chewed beyond recognition. Most children don't agree that they could do without the security of those things—and they have a point.

Think of all the times you've walked through trials and found yourself at a loss. Where do you go to feel secure? The best place you can go is to God. He is our security, and he gives us the strength we need to press on. We should feel lost when we don't have him nearby. When he's right beside us—sharing our pillow in the dark of night, riding beside us in the car, or sitting next to us at our desk—we sense that everything is going to be ok.

*In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD,  
make me dwell in safety (Psalm 4:8, NIV).*

Lord God, I look solely to you for my security. There is no better place to find it.



JUNE 5

## Acts of Kindness

Small acts of kindness can be deeply impacting. You never know how encouraging a simple act of kindness can be to another mom. Regardless of what is going on around you, try to take the time to reach out to another mom. Invite her in for a cup of coffee and a break from her own chaos. Take her kids off her hands for a morning so she can rest. Write her a letter of encouragement, or surprise her with a simple gift just because.

We can get so wrapped up in our own hurts and trials that we miss those around us who are in the middle of their own struggles. God wants us to care for the hurting.

*Love each other like brothers and sisters. Give each other more honor than you want for yourselves (Romans 12:10, NCV).*

No act you do in the name of Jesus Christ is insignificant. Can you see the needs around you? Ask God for insight into your friends' worlds. It doesn't matter how messy you are, you can always reach out to others and help them.

JUNE 6

## Wildly in Love

The phrase Jesus loves you should cause us to gasp with joy, tremble with relief, and rest with peace. It is the most profound statement in the entire universe. However, when we hear it so often, our ears get dull and we are no longer moved by the greatest truth in all of human history.

Let's remember the love of Jesus today. The creator of the universe is the embodiment of love. His love is strong—very strong. It is able to sustain the weight of the entire world's sin. Every horrific sin committed, every vile, perverse action was not strong enough to turn God away from mankind forever. He is still consumed with love for his precious creation. Nothing is strong enough to separate us from God's love. It still wins hearts. It still conquers self-doubt and hatred. It silences our accusers. It says, "This is my bride, and I love her!"

*I am my beloved's, And his desire is toward me  
(Song of Solomon 7:10, NKJV).*

God is wildly in love with you, dear mother. Nothing can separate you from his love. Enjoy him today. Let his love conquer your doubt. It is indeed more than able!

JUNE 7

## *Blood, Sweat, and Tears*

Have you ever watched the Olympics and marveled at the incredible strength, discipline, and God-given talent of the athletes? Watching interviews, we commonly hear the question, “Where do you get the strength—the motivation?” Daily life, while not an Olympic sport, requires its own motivation if we are to push through the blood, sweat, and tears to the gold medal that awaits us. Moses, after the victorious escape from Pharaoh’s army, praises the source of their strength in the Scripture above.

Are you facing an Olympic-sized trial? Are you wondering where your strength to endure will come from? Does it seem absolutely crazy that God can and will lift you up to overcome? Remember that he is your strength and your song; trust his power to be yours and praise him because he is worthy.

*“I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;  
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.  
The LORD is my strength and my song,  
and he has become my salvation;  
this is my God, and I will praise him,  
my father’s God, and I will exalt him” (Exodus 15:1-2, ESV).*

Lord, you alone have the strength I need to make it through this struggle. You support me time and time again. I trust you, thank you, and exalt you.



JUNE 8

## Longing for Affirmation

Children will often test the limits with their parents. They act out, break rules, and push boundaries. This testing is a view inside their hearts. They want to know answers to important questions: “Do you love me?” “How much?” “For always?” They need constant encouragement and affirmation that no matter who they are or what they do, our love and devotion will stay the same. So they test it.

In many ways we are like children. We want affirmation that God will always love us. We push his limits. We test boundaries and may even go as far as walking away from him to see if he will follow. We long to know that his love for us is steadfast and unwavering.

*I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow--not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:38, NLT).*

Do you relate to God like a child? Is your heart crying out to be reminded that he loves you now and always will? God is eager to erase your doubts and encourage you that he will always love you. He will go to great lengths to ease your fears.

JUNE 9

## *Shower of Love*

Everyone makes mistakes. So, friends, be kind to yourselves. Be kind to the daughter you see in the mirror. Be kind to that girl you might not think is worthy of love. Be kind to the mom who is full of imperfections and mistakes. God loves you, inadequacies and all. He sees you through the lens of a Father that loves without conditions or expectations.

We can learn so much from the love of our heavenly Father. It is so important to make every effort to see beyond the situation: beyond mayhem and spilled milk, beyond the colored writing on the wall and the tantrums being thrown on the floor, beyond the outbursts of emotion and breaking of curfews. We can choose to look for the best parts. The gifts entrusted to our care are worth the love and forgiveness we should shower on them every day.

*Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance (1 Corinthians 13:7, NLT).*

What are the imperfections you see in yourself and your children that you can give up? Show your children more grace by loving them unconditionally. Let them be found saying, "It's okay; I made a mistake, but I'm still loved."

JUNE 10

## *The Right Foundation*

His brothers laughed at his heavy laboring, day in and day out, while they lounged around. Their homes had taken no time at all to complete, and they liked them just fine. Until the wolf came, with his gusting huffs and puffs and then... The story is as familiar as its lesson: take the time to do things right so when trouble comes you will be safe. Build with worthy materials, and you'll have something that lasts through the fiercest of storms.

God is the rock on which we can build with confidence. Not only can we have assurance in his firm foundation, but he promises to bless us as we dwell with him. Rains, flooding, gusting wind will come, but he will see us through every storm with truth which will strengthen our faith. We will see him triumph over sin and darkness, and we will overflow with thankfulness!

*Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness (Colossians 2:7, NLT).*

God, help me to rejoice in the midst of the storms. As the winds howl around me, let my faith grow strong. Nothing can come against me that will blow my house down when I'm on your strong foundation.



JUNE 11

## Real Wisdom

The minute an expectant mother begins to show, people—total strangers even—start offering advice and sharing the “wisdom” they’ve accumulated through their own years of parenting. Some suggestions, like which stroller to buy or whether cloth or disposable diapers are the way to go, are easily discernible as helpful or not.

When it comes to bigger decisions, matters of the heart and soul, how do we know when to really listen? Here’s some great advice from James:

*The wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere (James 3:17, NLT).*

Do you have a more experienced mom you rely on for parenting wisdom? If so, how does her advice fare when held up to these standards? If you do not have someone you rely on, pray God will send you someone with true wisdom.

JUNE 12

## *Not Just a Mom*

Sometimes we wonder if our efforts as moms are worthwhile. We devote all of our time and energy into loving and teaching the children entrusted into our care. Many times our efforts go unseen, and we feel insignificant in the world's eyes.

The world may see you as “just a mom,” but in God's eyes, your job is important. Raising children to be tenderhearted toward God is one of the greatest tasks you can be called to.

*“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you”*  
(Luke 6:38, NIV).

Are you aware of how very important your role as a mother is? Even when your days seem long and endless, when parenting is more work than blessing, take heart that your job as a mother is valuable.

JUNE 13

## Comfortable

We have all experienced loss in our lives—some to a greater degree than others. In these times when we are grieving the loss of a loved one, a job, or even experiencing the loss of a relationship breakdown, it is good to acknowledge that pain is uncomfortable. We cannot hide from feeling angry, disappointed, extremely sad, or lonely. However, we can bring these emotions to our heavenly Father, and ask him to ease the pain.

The Scriptures say that Jesus is the Father of mercies and is able to comfort us in all our troubles. He can bring peace, joy, and the comfort of knowing his presence each and every day. He can bring help from others. His Word can bring life to our hearts. There are many ways that God comforts us. We then can one day share this comfort with others who need to experience God's presence during hard times.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation (2 Corinthians 1:3, NKJV).*

Lord, I bring all of my emotions before you and ask you meet me in my feeling of loss. Allow me to feel your presence, so that I know I am not alone. Help me to comfort those around me who need it, in the same way you have shown me comfort.



JUNE 14

## *Faithfulness of Love*

There is nothing in the universe like God's love. We tend to view God's love through a human filter. When we hear the word love, we often have other attributes attached to that word, sometimes even unknowingly. But when God says he loves us, he means love in its purest form. He means unadulterated, undefiled love—love that is never selfish and never has other motives.

His love is remarkably strong. It is able to bear the weight of everything. Jesus never cracked or broke on that cross. His love bore the weight of every sin. His love is also entirely steadfast. It never wanes or loses intensity. It is constantly there—never failing amongst the failures of man. He doesn't base his love for us on our love for him. That would be fickle.

*I will sing of the LORD's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself (Psalm 89:1–2, NIV).*

Mother, take some time to enjoy the faithfulness of God's love. As you do, you will find it increases your capacity to love others well.

JUNE 15

## *Knowing the Shepherd's Voice*

In the Bible, God's people are sometimes called sheep. The only protection sheep have from predators is to stick together and follow their shepherd. Right from birth, lambs learn quickly to follow the herd. This can be both a positive skillset and a negative one. For our little lambs, it means they are easily influenced by anyone older. This can be a scary thought for a parent in today's world of peer pressure.

Jesus says we should know his voice and follow him. Our job as moms is to help our lambs hear the voice of Jesus. Our job is to teach them to be still so they can hear his whispers. We want them to recognize whose voice they hear. If they hear the voice of Jesus, they will more easily drown out the voices of others and follow him.

*"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me"*  
(John 10:27, NIV).

What are some practical things you can do to teach your children who Jesus is and how to hear his voice? Your children can learn from a young age to follow the one voice that matters. They will recognize Jesus by the sound of his voice, and he will lovingly lead them on the right path.

JUNE 16

## *A Reminder to Remember*

In times when people couldn't rely on writing a list or setting a reminder on their phone, they would sometimes tie strings around their index finger to remind them that something should be remembered. The string was a symbol to remember.

The Scripture is full of reminders that we should show mercy and compassion to those who are really in need. God had to continue to remind his people to take care of the widow, fatherless, foreigner, and poor. You might have a lot to get done today and you will have ways to remind yourself to do them. Will you find a symbol to remind you of the less fortunate? If you are feeling like you need a little help today, why don't you ask God to remind someone of your need.

*This is what the LORD Almighty said: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other" (Zechariah 7:9-10, NIV).*

Dear Lord, thank you for reminding me today that there are people in this world that are less fortunate than I am. Show me ways that I can show compassion to these people. I need your mercy and compassion so that I can be ready to love others, as you love me.



JUNE 17

## *It's Impossible*

So many of the things God asks of us seem impossible. How are we supposed to raise our children right when we know we ourselves could love more, trust more, give more, and care about ourselves less?

The story of Jesus' encounter with a wealthy young man illustrates this point poignantly. The young man wants to know how to guarantee his place in heaven. Jesus tells him he must give up everything he has. Everything. And this guy has a lot. He leaves devastated; the price is too high to pay. The disciples are concerned, wondering if anyone can actually do enough.

*“Humanly speaking, it is impossible.*

*But with God everything is possible” (Matthew 19:26, NLT).*

Jesus couldn't say it enough, and you can't hear it enough. You will never please God, and never enter his kingdom, on your own power. Rather than seeing this as a burden, allow yourself to see it as a blessing. Admit your weakness over your own sin and thank God for loving you and saving you anyway.

JUNE 18

## *Records of Wrong*

Many experts agree that one of the ways to keep relationships healthy and strong is to avoid phrases like “you always...”, “you never...”, or “I can’t believe you did this again!” True love releases past mistakes and genuinely believes for the best next time. This gives freedom from guilt and permission for the relationship to grow.

This truth applies to everyone we interact with including our sweet children. Let’s not keep track of their offenses and label them for their mistakes. Let’s give them freedom to grow and learn from their downfalls.

*[Love] keeps no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5, NIV).*

This goes for you too, Mama. God loves you and keeps no record of your confessed wrongs. Release yourself from regrets, and live in God’s freedom.

JUNE 19

## *Increase of Love*

We can hear over and over that God loves us, but sometimes it just takes time or a personal revelation to really understand the depth of his love. The Bible says that God is love and therefore the more we understand our God, the more we understand his love. As you gain insight into God's favor toward you and others, God gives you discernment and guidance to know what is best for your life.

Are you struggling with certain life decisions? Are you finding it hard to accept God's best for you? Allow yourself to soak in the depth of Christ's redeeming love. Then understand that he wants us to imitate this love. This is how we know what is best—when we make decisions out of love for Jesus and love for others.

*This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ (Philippians 1:9-10, NIV).*

Lord God, there is so much that I do not know or understand of you. But I know that you are love. Increase my knowledge of the depth of your love. Help me to discern what is best for my life by imitating the love you have shown me.



JUNE 20

## *Perfect Peace*

Do you find that you are a news junky—always following the latest headline? There are seasons when we might be called to that. Furthermore, it is prudent of us to be aware of the times that we are living in as we await the Lord's return. However, when following the events of the world, it is easy for fear to grip our hearts.

Perfect peace is a tremendous gift from the Lord! God isn't asserting that we can have peace when all is well in the world. His offer of perfect peace applies when everything around us is shaking. We do have a small part to play in this promise though. We are told to keep our minds on him.

*You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you,  
all whose thoughts are fixed on you! (Isaiah 26:3, NLT)*

Do you have your mind fixed on Christ? When your mind is on him, you become more grounded; you aren't tossed around by the waves of fear and worry. You can enjoy God's promise of stability and peace.

JUNE 21

## *Fostering Love for God*

Caring for our children doesn't end at ensuring that they have full bellies and a warm place to sleep at night. Those are just the basics. God asks us to invest in our children in a much deeper, more powerful way by teaching them to love him with all their heart, soul, and mind.

How do we instill this love for God in their hearts? By example. In everything we do and in everything we say, we should demonstrate our devotion to him. During dinner time, driving to school, playing at the park, or shopping at the mall, we should talk about God's goodness. Our homes and lives should center around Jesus.

*“You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:7, NASB).*

How are you investing in your child's walk with God? Invite Jesus into your conversations and activities. Foster an atmosphere for your child to seek God in a real and powerful way.

JUNE 22

## *More than Enough*

Most of us don't feel like we have a lot to give, especially in the way of finances, resources, or time. Remember the story of the widow who only had enough flour and oil to make one last meal for herself and her son? When the prophet Elijah asked for her to make him bread out of this, she became worried. This would likely be our response as well.

What we often forget when God asks us to give of ourselves, is that he has already supplied the means. All God requires is our willingness to participate in his good work. We might think of abundance as exceeding wealth, but it is really saying that we have more than what is needed. If God asks of your time, then you can assume that he has given you more. If he asks of your money, he has given you more than enough. The widow became abundantly blessed by her willingness to give, and God saw that she was never in want again.

*God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good works (2 Corinthians 9:8, NRSV).*

Lord, thank you for giving me more than enough of everything. I want to be willing to share what you have given me, and trust that you will make sure that I remain abundantly blessed. I give what I have to you.



JUNE 23

## With Him

Do you know that Jesus wants you with him all the time? He wants you to experience as much joy as you possibly can, so you will bring that joy to others. In John's gospel, Jesus implores his followers: abide in me; stay with me; remain in me. Just as a baby needs its mother to survive, so we need Christ. Without him, we can do nothing, but with him, in him, our lives bear fruit.

We can find ourselves totally connecting with God one moment, like after a great message at church or as we watch our sleeping children, only to have the connection fade as life's distractions push him aside. We are much more productive and joyful when we spend time in his presence.

*"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:10-11, ESV).*

What habits can you begin or end in order to abide in him, to remain in his presence? Let today be the day your joy begins to be full.

JUNE 24

## *The Fairy Tale*

As moms, days can blend together into weeks. We wake up and repeat the same day seven days a week: cycle after cycle. Sometimes that daily routine becomes mundane, and we can find ourselves in a pity-party pattern. Someone else's life seems better—more exciting, more balanced. This is where we have a choice. We can live a small story that is only about us; it fails to believe in who God is and what he is doing. Our days are mundane, our prayers are empty, and we are fearful, unhappy, and whiny.

Or we can live the story that the Bible promises to us as believers. Christ overcame death. The hard days, the times of suffering, the mundane weeks, are part of our building process to create something good and beautiful. Wisdom is born from uncertainty and confusion. God's voice is tender and loving. Our story is his story, and he determines our every step.

*Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled (Romans 15:4, NLT).*

How do you tell the story of God's faithfulness in your life? That story is a beautiful one to tell your children! It's the bigger story—the story that matters.

JUNE 25

## *Establish Your Heart*

We can decide on something in our minds and have the full intention to follow through, only to lose resolve when our heart is pulled elsewhere. The human heart is easily changed. It's driven by emotion and desire. Distractions of the world will readily try to shift our focus. That is why as children of God who are preparing for Christ's return, we must firmly plant our hearts in his truth—establishing ourselves on his Word in love.

If you keep your mind fixated on the promise of God and your heart established in the hope of eternity, then any other purpose will lose its appeal. The reality of the greatness that is ahead of you will so completely outweigh the attraction of what's distracting you. Establish yourself firmly in the Word of God, memorizing Scripture and meditating on truth, so that your divine purpose is always forefront in your heart.

*You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand (James 5:8, NKJV).*

Lord God, write your Word on my heart. Keep your truth continually in my mind. Establish me firmly in your presence so I will not be distracted by anything that tries to redirect my heart from you.



JUNE 26

## Servanthood

Most moms take on the brunt of household duties. Scrubbing, mopping, dusting, organizing, and washing clothes—it never ends! Neither do meal planning, grocery shopping, or cooking. It's an exhausting, and often thankless, job. This is why we need to be extra careful not to let bitterness creep into our hearts. We serve our families because we love them, but it's easy to forget that day after day with our hands in dirty dishwater. In those times we need to remember Jesus, who humbly knelt before his disciples to wash their feet. What a powerful image.

*“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14, NKJV).*

What is the condition of your heart when you serve your family and household? What can you do to guard yourself against bitterness? Maybe not today, but one day your children will look back and remember your hard work and the example you gave them of Jesus. Every dish you wash, every meal you cook, and each load of laundry has meaning. So press on, Mom. God is using you to serve your children.

JUNE 27

## He Sees

When you play peek-a-boo with a really small child, they think that if they cover their eyes you can't see them. It's funny, isn't it, that they think they can hide by simply covering their own eyes? When they are a little older, hide and seek is similar. Hiding in plain sight, unable to control their giggles, they believe as long as they don't look at us, we won't see them. Adorable.

Maybe that's how God reacts when we try to hide from him. "Oh, how precious! She thinks because she is pretending to enjoy herself, I can't see how much she's hurting inside." Whatever we are thinking, pretending, ignoring, or forcing ourselves through, God sees our hearts. He knows our pain and he knows our sin—and he wants to take it all away.

*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable (Hebrews 4:13, NLT).*

Are you hiding in any part of your life? Do you believe that if you haven't confessed something, maybe God hasn't noticed it yet? Spend a few minutes searching yourself for anything you are trying to keep hidden, and ask God for the faith to uncover your eyes.

JUNE 28

## Powerful Words

There is so much power in quieting our minds and listening to the voice of God as he speaks directly to us. We must learn to recognize his voice above any other sound. God has the power and the ability to speak to any situation we are going through, under any circumstance.

Since the beginning of time, God has begun powerful works with a powerful Word. When we listen for him to speak, we ready ourselves for him to do those works in and through us.

*“Son of man, let all my words sink deep into your own heart first. Listen to them carefully for yourself” (Ezekiel 3:10, NLT).*

Lord, I want to be someone who does powerful works for your kingdom. I know that I cannot do them without the words from your mouth. Let me be a listener who both absorbs your Word and is changed by it.



JUNE 29

## *Life of Laughter*

When was the last time you shouted with joy? It seems as the years go by, we find ourselves with more responsibility, more tasks, more heartache, and often more conflict. Our body gets tired, our minds grow weary, and our emotions are spent. It is important in times of heaviness that we find reasons to smile and laugh.

God created laughter, and he is the source of true joy. If you are feeling like there is not enough joy in your life, take time to reflect on God's love for you. Understand that he is a merciful God. Know that he delights in you. Dwell on the beauty of his creation. Thank him for the good relationships that he has brought into your life. Find him in a song, or a dance, or the smile of a child. When you seek God, you will find what you need. Let him once again fill your mouth with laughter.

*He will once again fill your mouth with laughter  
and your lips with shouts of joy (Job 8:21, NLT).*

Dear God, I want to feel joy again in my life. I want to be a person that reflects the deep joy that is experienced by knowing you. Remind me of things today that are good reasons to smile. Fill my mouth with laughter, and my lips with shouts of joy.

JUNE 30

## Managing Time

Do you sometimes look at the clock and wonder where the last few hours went? Or stare at your to-do list and wish you could add a few hours to the clock or days to the calendar? Time is short and precious; we know this. Why then is time so difficult to manage and make the most of? In a word: distraction.

We enter a room to put away a wayward stuffed animal then find ourselves coming up for air an hour or more later, having rearranged the closet, the dresser drawers, or even the furniture. We sit down at our computer to respond to a single important email, and hours can disappear in a blink. So what's the answer?

*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 5:15-17, ESV).*

Paul's advice can be broken down into a few steps:

- Look carefully how you walk.
- Make the best use of the time.
- Understand the will of the Lord.





# JULY

If anyone belongs to Christ,  
there is a new creation.  
The old things have gone;  
everything is made new!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17, NCV



JULY 1

## *Lasting Love*

Romantic relationships come and go; people can be in love one day and out of it the next! When love is approached selfishly, relationships are abandoned when there is no longer a benefit. This can even happen in friendships. If you have been through this kind of heartache, you may be a bit cynical about love.

If selfish love easily ends, then it must be unselfish love that endures. We know from the Scriptures that Jesus was the ultimate example of selflessness. Jesus sacrificed his life on the cross because of his great love for us. This is a love that gives preference to others and always seeks their best. Do you need to be reminded that God's love for you is enduring? He is good and therefore his love for you is pure and unfailing.

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever (1 Chronicles 16:34, NIV).*

Lord, I thank you that you love me with an everlasting love. Let me be reminded today of your goodness and faithfulness to me. At times I have felt disappointed by love, but I thank you that my hope can be restored because of your great love.

JULY 2

## *Cinderella and Prince Charming*

Whether we have sons or daughters, there is an expectation that when they fall in love, it will be a forever kind of love. Disney movies and fairy tale romances have our kids believing that their spouses will fall out of the sky looking incredibly dashing. They won't have baggage, they won't have sin, and they won't have bad days where they question their purpose. These perfect people will be kind to everyone and generous to all.

Our children may be buying into the lie that marriage should be perfect. In doing so, they are setting themselves up for a difficult road. But there is hope. We can teach them God's blueprint for marriage. Marriage was the idea of our Father. He designed marriage and knows exactly what it needs to thrive.

*When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5, NIV).*

Are you comfortable speaking with your children about the expectations of marriage? Encourage your children that they need to be committed to their future spouse through the beauty and the trial that marriage can bring. Help them set their expectations with God's parameters.

JULY 3

## Joy in Circumstance

Dropped into a well, sold into slavery by his own brothers, jailed in the wake of false accusations, Joseph has a thing or two to teach us about faith and perseverance. The next time the frustrations, pressures, and even heartbreaks of motherhood overwhelm you, perhaps Joseph's story can inspire you to hang in there—and maybe even find a little joy. Joseph loved God with his whole heart, so he felt his presence all the time. This presence allowed him to experience joy in the unlikeliest of places and in the worst of circumstances.

Circumstances don't matter as much when God is with us. We've seen the joy in the eyes of a Christian Haitian or African. That joy certainly isn't coming from the poverty, disease, and devastation all around them. It's coming from their hearts, and it is available to us as well. If God could help Joseph thrive in prison, surely he can help us in our present situations.

*The LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did (Genesis 39:21, 23, NIV).*

Lift up your concerns to God today. Be bold, and ask him for the joy that transcends all circumstances.



JULY 4

## Freedom

Do we realize the depth of the freedom we have received because of Christ? Jesus came to set the captives free. Free from what? Free from the sin that so easily entangles us. Free from the shame that weighs us down. Free from guilt over our already confessed sins. We were set free to love him and live for him.

Do we live like we are free, or are there things that we are slaves to? It is easy to have imposed on us, or to impose on others, requirements that we think God makes. We have a propensity to love rules and regulations, but many, if not most, of those rules and regulations God does not require us to keep.

*For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17, NLT).*

Christ set you free to enjoy his completed work on the cross. You need not earn it or strive to maintain his work. He said, "It is finished." May the God of all comfort fill your heart with a renewed ability to enjoy your freedom.

JULY 5

## *Not Shaken*

We all have different ways of dealing with worry. Some internalize it, others call a friend, and still others find a way to take their minds off it. When we bring our worry to God and lay our anxious hearts bare before him, he will encourage us, lift us up, and sustain us. He will not allow us to be shaken or weakened by worry because he holds us through every situation.

The God who knows beginning from end is not flustered by our anxiety, and does not allow us to be overcome by uncertainty.

*Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you;  
He will never allow the righteous to be shaken (Psalm 55:22, NASB).*

Thank you, God, that you welcome me to come to you when I am burdened. You don't want me to carry my anxiety alone. My future is secure in your hands, and all I have to do is rest in you.

JULY 6

## God of Safety

We all applaud the heroism of the young boy David when he took on the giant, Goliath. Or the boldness of Moses when he confronted Pharaoh about freeing the Israelites. But do we recognize that the same safety given to them has been given to us? They were regular people like us, who understood the power of the God they served.

Whatever you are facing right now, God is more than able to rescue you and keep you safe in the midst of it.

*Those who go to God Most High for safety will be protected by the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "You are my place of safety and protection. You are my God and I trust you" (Psalm 91:1-2, NCV).*

God, I want to have the kind of radical trust that these Biblical heroes had. Give me the boldness that I need to be a believer who walks in your power.



JULY 7

## *Fascination*

The natural result of love is fascination: to be drawn to something so irresistibly that nothing can keep you from it. When we fascinate ourselves with the Word of God, we become an indestructible force in the spiritual realm.

We cannot be easily subjected to the lies of the enemy when our hearts have been saturated in the truth. By loving the teachings of God, his wisdom becomes our confidence and his presence our reward.

*Those who love your teachings will find true peace,  
and nothing will defeat them (Psalm 119:165, NCV).*

God, give me a love for your teachings. When my flesh rises up against your truth, help me to overcome it by your Spirit. Let me be fascinated by you. Give me a love for you and your Word that is unmatched by any other love in my life.

JULY 8

## *Afraid of Monsters*

As children we were fearful of monsters under the bed, or we were frightened by the thought of what could be lurking in the dark corners of the room. As irrational as those fears were, they were real to us. We froze, dared not to breathe or cry out, shut our eyes tightly bidding sleep to come. The nights and the darkness they brought seemed endless.

As adults we still fear monsters; however, these days they take the form of an irate boss, difficulty with a relationship, an unfavorable medical diagnosis, or a credit card bill. Fear grips us in a real and powerful way, immobilizing us. If we aren't careful, fear can destroy our peace of mind.

*I sought the LORD, and he answered me  
and delivered me from all my fears.  
Those who look to him are radiant,  
and their faces shall never be ashamed (Psalm 34:4-5, ESV).*

What are the monsters that you fear? As a child of God, you can cry out to him, confident that he will help. You can shake fear and know that whatever monster you face, you don't face it alone.

JULY 9

## Quiet Waters

If your kids are young, your house likely isn't quiet. Their many noises, while precious, can make for a frenzied atmosphere. There might be times that their laughter is music to your ears, for it means they aren't sick or sullen. But there are other times that you might feel like you are going crazy from all the noise.

On those days, we have to let him lead us to quiet waters. We know that he is our shepherd. He says we are like sheep. Without a shepherd, sheep wander. We, by nature, won't get the rest we need, so he makes it his job to take us to places of rest. He knows how to lead us to the still, quiet waters.

*The LORD is my shepherd,*

*I shall not want.*

*He makes me lie down in green pastures;*

*He leads me beside quiet waters.*

*He restores my soul (Psalm 23:1-3, NASB).*

Literally speaking, your "quiet waters" might still be quite loud. But God knows if he can quiet your mind and your thoughts, you will receive the life-giving rejuvenation that only he can provide.



JULY 10

## *He Never Sleeps*

How long can you go without sleep? Most of us have gone all night at least once, but we also collapsed, exhausted, as soon as we were able. No matter how important the task, how critical the vigil, we all have to take a break eventually.

All except God. The one who watches over you, the one who makes sure you won't stumble as you climb today's mountain, never stops watching. Always and forever, night and day, he's got you.

*He will not let you stumble;  
the one who watches over you  
will not slumber (Psalm 121:3, NLT).*

Father, I marvel today at the realization that you never take your eyes off me. You have my eternity in your heart, and you won't let me fall. Whatever my mistakes, you are awake and ready to guide me back to the right path. Thank you, Lord, for your constant presence.

JULY 11

## *In the Secret*

Cherish the secret things. So much of our life is for others. So much. Whether it is the requirement of jobs, raising children, or the programs we volunteer for, so much of our time and energy is spent on other people.

God wants our time. He wants it for us and for him. Maybe this will require a designated prayer closet, or a distant quiet place. Maybe we head outside with our Bible and journal to sneak away for a while. However we do it, our heavenly Father sees us. He sees us! What a faithful gift that thought alone is; he sees us in secret and will meet us where we are.

*“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:5-6, NIV).*

Can you get away today in secret to pray? In secret, God will reward your heart. Make sneaking away with him a daily routine.

JULY 12

## Transparency

It is okay to cry over spilled milk. It really is. We all have hard days—days where we wake up late, we lose the keys, we can't find matching socks...and then the milk spills! We have those days where we just want to throw in the towel and call it quits. As moms, we think we have to have it all together, all the time. We don't though. It is okay to be transparent with each other. By doing so we allow others to love us, encourage us, and pray for us.

Sharing our struggles not only lessens our burdens but reinforces the fact that we are not alone. It also gives permission for our fellow moms to be transparent as well.

*Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart,  
and the pleasantness of a friend  
springs from their heartfelt advice (Proverbs 27:9, NIV).*

Do you feel like you need to be perfect? You don't. Be transparent with a friend today, and reap the benefits of sharing your struggles.



JULY 13

## *No Darkness*

In total darkness, we instinctively seek light. We turn on our phones, fumble for a light switch, light a candle.

With a single light source, the darkness can be overcome. We can find our way.

This same principle applies to our hearts. God is pure light, and with him, we can overcome any darkness we face. No temptation, no addiction, no sin is too powerful for God to conquer.

*This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5, NIV).*

Father, I know that whenever and wherever I face darkness, I need only seek your face. You are all good, all pure, all light. I surrender my struggle with the darkness to you, and ask you to help me overcome it. I want to live in your pure light.

JULY 14

## *They'll Come Around*

Proverbs 22:6 might be the single most popular verse in the Bible regarding parenting: “Train children to live the right way, and when they are old, they will not stray from it” (NCV). It’s extremely comforting when our kids are little, happily attending Sunday school, singing Bible songs in their car seats; it’s easy then to believe they’ll grow up dedicated to their faith and to the values you are teaching them.

Then they get a little older. More often than anyone wants to admit, many children go through a spiritual rebellion; a number of them walk away from their faith entirely. Now what?

*Be humble when you are trying to teach those who are mixed up concerning the truth. For if you talk meekly and courteously to them, they are more likely, with God’s help, to turn away from their wrong ideas and believe what is true (2 Timothy 2:25, TLB).*

No matter their age, what can you do today to point your children in the right direction? How can you gently instruct them in the truth, so it’s a path they will know and love—and return to?

JULY 15

## Knowing Him More

Don't you picture the most serene, quiet setting when you hear about a secret place? Maybe it's in a field where you sit by yourself, waiting for the Lord to encounter you. Or maybe it's on a porch where everything else has vanished.

Hopefully, whatever we picture, we see us and Jesus together, having a conversation. That is his desire. When we take time to be still, to sit in silence, he will meet us. We will hear his promises for our lives and get to know him at a deeper level. The hustle and bustle of daily life needs to vanish, and we need to meet him in quiet to hear his whisper.

*The LORD directs the steps of the godly.  
He delights in every detail of their lives.  
Though they stumble, they will never fall,  
for the LORD holds them by the hand (Psalm 37:23–24, NLT).*

Can you sit in silence today? Take some time to be in his presence. It isn't something that comes naturally, so give yourself patience and practice. Sitting in silence takes skill—and skill needs to be sharpened.



JULY 16

## *He Will Shelter You*

Like an eagle, God shelters us beneath his wings from storms and attacks. The image is powerful, yet also tender. How wonderful it is to be tucked in, right up against him, absorbing his warmth!

Do you rest in this promise of protection, or do you struggle, always poking your head out to see what dangers await? Maybe you've even tried to leave the nest altogether and take care of yourself. If so, return to his side. Accept his protection.

*He will cover you with his feathers.*

*He will shelter you with his wings.*

*His faithful promises are your armor  
and protection (Psalm 91:4, NLT).*

Lord, you are my shelter. Thank you for providing me a safe, warm place to wait out life's storms. Forgive me for the times I resist you, believing I can do it alone. Your wings are my armor, and they are mighty to save.

JULY 17

## Love Never Fails

Often unintentionally, we place human qualities on God's attributes—we make him in our image. Many of us find it almost impossible to believe that God's love is pure. We can't imagine completely selfless love. That is because we assume he is like us. But he isn't.

God's love never fails. It will never cease. It is impenetrable—it has no weak points where it will eventually break.

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7, ESV).*

Do you see how you can diminish God's love by assuming he loves like a human? His love was what caused him to create the earth and save the world. It is the totality of all that he is, and it will never fail you—no matter what you have done.

JULY 18

## *Desire to Be Known*

Do you desire to be known? Most of us do. It is in us to crave deep connections with people and with God. We long for others to know us completely: what we like and don't like, what is in our hearts, and what we fear. We want to share our stories and be understood. It is frustrating and lonely when we're not.

God knows us completely. He understands us in ways no one else can. How wonderful it is to be known and loved by Jesus Christ.

*O LORD, You have searched me and known me.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
You understand my thought from afar.  
(Psalm 139:1-2, NASB).*

Are you aware of how much God adores you? He not only calls you by name but knows the inner workings of your heart and soul. You are known, and you are deeply loved.



JULY 19

## *Peace and Quiet*

Peace and quiet. Just saying those words together can bring comfort. It can also bring despair, if they seem out of reach. How, oh how can we claim them?

Through righteousness comes peace, quietness, and assurance. Forever. It's a big word, righteousness, and one you may have shied away from. If so, lean in. Righteousness is not an unattainable ideal of perfection or superiority. It's about putting God first, and living in a way that honors him. In exchange for your honor, he offers the peace and quiet you long for.

*The work of righteousness will be peace,  
And the effect of righteousness,  
quietness and assurance forever (Isaiah 32:17, NKJV).*

Lord, I want to live a righteous life. Not just for the peace you offer in return, or the quiet assurance of your love for me, but because you are God, wholly deserving of my honor and devotion.

JULY 20

## Cheerleader

“Come on, buddy, you can do it. Just a little bit further!” Ah, the sweet sound of an older sibling nurturing a younger one: showing them the ropes, encouraging them in their endeavors, leading them. It’s best when these moments are heard from afar. Our older children are getting it! They understand that they’re leaders, that being kind is so much more fun than not, that encouragement is invaluable.

In this same way, let us encourage one another in our faith. Imagine our Abba Father’s joy when he sees us lifting one another up in praise and love. There is so much to be gained in relationship with other believers, whether on the receiving or giving end.

*May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had (Romans 15:5, NIV).*

What are some ways you can encourage others? Think of the delight in God’s heart when he sees you giving your time and talents.

JULY 21

## Human Contact

Many chain restaurants now have little electronic tablets on the tables. These can be used for browsing the menu, buying games for kids to play, or paying the bill at the end of dinner. We should ponder this for a moment. We've gone out to eat with our families to enjoy some time together, and there's that tablet, threatening to steal all that precious time away with a touch of the screen.

When we can't spend a few moments interacting with each other before our food is served, it does seem like we're missing out on an important piece of human existence. In a world of plentiful electronic devices, holding on to some sacred pieces of togetherness might be necessary.

*Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart (1 Peter 1:22, NIV).*

How do you ensure that your family spends time together? You don't need to deny yourself every convenience of modern technology, but can you find an area or two that you can keep to yourselves as a family? Real time together is necessary for good relationships.



JULY 22

## Why?

“Why?” Call to mind a toddler who has just grasped the meaning and power of this wonderful little word. Over and over, to everything they hear, they respond, “Why?”

As we grow we learn to stop asking why so often, but inside our minds, we maintain a powerful desire to know. It is human nature. However, when it comes to the mind of God, we cannot satisfy this desire. His mind—his ways—cannot be known. Accepting and even embracing this truth is a sign of spiritual growth.

*As you do not know the path of the wind,  
or how the body is formed in a mother's womb,  
so you cannot understand the work of God,  
the Maker of all things (Ecclesiastes 11:5, NIV).*

Father, I long to know you! Even regarding that which I cannot know, my soul cries out, “But why?” Please help me enjoy the wondering, Lord. Help me rest in your sovereignty.

JULY 23

## Carried

Often whether awake or asleep, our hearts and thoughts are centered on our children. Motherhood is heavy. We worry about making the best decisions. We hope that our love and care is enough. We strive to teach our children the ways they should go. We fight to protect their hearts and minds. Children captivate our time and our energy.

Parenting is wonderful, amazing, and exhausting. But there is rest. God carries us through the storms of motherhood. When our arms are heavy with children, he holds us. When we need answers and direction, he guides us. In his gentleness he loves and cares for us. He knows the battle is tough, and he will carry us through it. As we tend to our children, he is tending to us.

*He takes care of his people like a shepherd.*

*He gathers them like lambs in his arms*

*and carries them close to him.*

*He gently leads the mothers of the lambs (Isaiah 40:11, NCV).*

Do you know that God carries you? You aren't alone in mothering, and your burdens are his. Let him release you from those burdens now.

JULY 24

## *The Servant Heart*

Some days it feels like a whistle might work well in a household: a whistle to stop the kids from fighting, a whistle to get someone's attention, a whistle so the noise stops. A whistle so we feel heard. Having a servant heart isn't easy, but, as a mother, it's required. Be assured though, there is joy to be found in a servant's heart.

The Bible says that through love we are called to serve. It also says with our freedom in Christ we aren't meant to satisfy the desires of our flesh. We serve one another selflessly, without complaining or grumbling. We serve because we love. It's a beautiful thought. Every time we get on the floor and wrestle with our kids, or play a game, or serve a meal, we are showing them tangible, undeniable love.

*For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13, NLT).*

When you serve, you are showing love. Remind yourself of that in the mundane details of today, and allow the Lord to fill you with his joy as you continue to serve those placed in your care.



JULY 25

## Coffee with God

How is morning for you? Do you rise before you need to, eager to start your day, or is the snooze button your best friend? If you are in the former group, do you begin your day with God?

Numerous times in Scripture, we are encouraged to be morning people. For some, this advice is not even necessary; for others, it seems impossibly out of reach. “I’m just not wired that way,” we say. Perhaps, if this is us, a rewiring is in order. If you knew you had a coffee date with the Father, would you even need an alarm?

*I rise before dawn and cry for help;*

*I wait for Your words (Psalm 119:147, NASB).*

Lord, I don’t want to miss a minute with you. Beginning my day in your Word, soaking up your wisdom, is a joy and a privilege. Whether for the first or the thousand and first time, I desire to spend the first minutes of every day alone with you.

JULY 26

## *Everything to Everyone*

The demands of motherhood are relentless. Someone always needs us, yet we are still human. We need rest, we need sleep, and we need time and strength to care for others and for ourselves. Sometimes it can feel like other people's needs are pressing so tightly into us that we can't breathe.

It is impossible to do it all for, or be it all to, everyone. Eventually something has to give. When that happens, we feel discouraged. It is easy to become overwhelmed with expectations—ours and others'. We need to give ourselves permission to not be everything to everyone. Because we can't. God can. We shouldn't try to take on his role. He doesn't need us to.

*God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8, NRSV).*

Do you feel overwhelmed? Let it go and be encouraged that God knows what you need. When you feel like you can't manage, you should remember that God can. And he will help you.

JULY 27

## *Not a Result of Works*

When it's still and quiet, take a moment to remember your salvation. Enjoy the finished work of the cross. Often when we first get saved, we seem to understand that it is purely God's power that has saved us and no effort of our own. As time goes on, we begin to walk away from old sinful behaviors, but something subtle and entirely wicked often takes place in our hearts.

We begin to believe that we have some merit on our own (apart from Christ's work) that makes us desirable to the Father. We believe, at least in part, that we save ourselves by our good records of sinlessness. This makes us self-righteous and proud. The opposite can be true as well: if we struggle with a besetting sin, we believe we aren't received by God.

*By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8, ESV).*

God saved you fully and completely by his power alone—not by your own merit. You don't need to continue trying to earn it. Because of that, you can rest from your works and your self-hatred. Simply pause to enjoy him.



JULY 28

## *Proud or Pride?*

There has never been a more charming, talented, intelligent child than yours. Just ask you. It's true; your child is wonderful. Our children are wonderful. Whether it's a soccer trophy, or cutting a tooth without crying, we're proud of them, and justifiably so. These amazing little beings came from us. It's a miracle that never stops being miraculous.

So when does being proud of our children become the sin of pride? We have to check our hearts. Are we comparing our children to others, or boasting to gain status and put others in their place? According to Paul, who had plenty of accomplishments to tout, there's only one thing worth boasting about, and that's our salvation.

*As for me, may I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world's interest in me has also died (Galatians 6:14, NLT).*

What are some of the most special things about your children? Ask God to help you appreciate the incredible people they are without getting wrapped up in worldly competition. Tell Jesus how much his sacrifice means to you.

JULY 29

## *A Mustard Seed*

Just because something is difficult, it doesn't mean that it's not what God has planned for us. When we hit roadblocks, it's not always a sign that we are heading down the wrong path. It is so easy to start thinking like this when things don't go our way. We must have faith.

Nothing is impossible with God. If our journeys aren't exactly what we imagined, or we're feeling doubt, we need to give it to God. Trust that a little faith, will allow us to move mountains; we can have faith that there is joy in the journey and a plan for our lives. Sometimes, the uphill battle might be the only way to get to the end. But we will come out stronger, more faith-filled, more passionate, and more trusting on the other side.

*"If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20, ESV).*

Do you believe that faith as small as a mustard seed can truly move mountains? Meditate on that for a few minutes.

JULY 30

## *The Power of Words*

What's the most hurtful thing anyone ever said to you? Most of us can recall at least a short list pretty quickly, and often something said by our parents rests near the top. Even if you came from a loving home, chances are you were dealt some harsh words, and they stuck with you. Now quickly, what are some of the most affirming, encouraging words you've ever heard? Again, most of us can call to mind a well-timed compliment or encouragement, even from many years ago.

As parents, the words we say carry opportunity and responsibility. We can bring life and positivity, or we can bring the sting of insult.

*The words of a good person give life, like a fountain of water,  
but the words of the wicked contain nothing but violence  
(Proverbs 10:11, NCV).*

Do you remember some of the hurtful things you've said to your children? Do they remember? How often do you speak words of love, life, and encouragement over them? Do they know how amazing they are? Tell them.



JULY 31

## *Sacrifice to What End?*

How far would you go for your children? In Genesis, we are introduced to Rebekah, a mother willing to sacrifice her entire future for her favorite son. Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons. Esau came out first so, by law, was to receive the generational blessing along with the majority of his father's considerable wealth. This suited their father just fine, as Esau's manly ways and adventurous spirit made him Isaac's favorite. But Rebekah preferred Jacob, who had been born just seconds later, clinging to the heel of his twin.

God had told Rebekah that Jacob would be the greater of her two sons, so she had to find a way around tradition. She devised a plan to trick Isaac, but Jacob was hesitant to go along with it. Rebekah, determined to get what she wanted and anxious to ensure God's plan was fulfilled, would not be swayed.

*His mother said to him, "My son, let the curse fall on me.*

*Just do what I say; go and get them for me" (Genesis 27:13, NIV).*

What do you take away from the story of Rebekah and Jacob: an example of a mother's selfless love or a story of conniving and lying to achieve selfish ends? Can both lessons be taught through the story of this family? What would you give up for your own children? What is going too far?



# AUGUST

God gave us a spirit not of fear  
but of power and love and self-control.

2 TIMOTHY 1:7, ESV



AUGUST 1

## *Opened, Lifted, and Loved*

Our God loves to restore life to his creation.

When Jesus came to earth, he healed many physical needs. Greater than physical healing, Jesus came to restore our spiritual brokenness. He opened eyes to the truth, ministered to the poor in spirit, and restored believers to righteousness.

How blessed you are. He has opened your eyes, he will always lift you up in times of trouble, and he loves you because you have chosen the path of righteousness. Let the God of encouragement and restoration be your strength today.

*The LORD opens the eyes of the blind;  
The LORD raises up those who are bowed down;  
The LORD loves the righteous (Psalm 146:8, NASB).*

God, you have opened my eyes to the truth; you have forgiven my sin, and you love me. Some days I have fallen harder than others, and today I need you to once again bring restoration to my body and soul. Thank you for picking me up and encouraging me on the path of righteousness.



AUGUST 2

## Enough

Have you ever walked into a room full of women and felt like you were being sized up? The message is subtle: you are not enough. Sadly, the world is quick to display our faults and deem us unworthy or incapable. Our efforts appear futile. There are so many that are eager to criticize.

We can't listen to those voices. Trying to measure up to the world's standards is not only exhausting, it's impossible. Listening to the lies will destroy us. Instead we should set our confidence in Jesus Christ—the one who says, “You are enough.” He called each of us to motherhood, and he says that we are wonderful.

*A capable wife who can find?*

*She is far more precious than jewels (Proverbs 31:10, NRSV).*

Are you listening to the world's definition of you? You are a beautiful child of God who, by his grace, is perfectly capable to carry out the task he has created you for. Carry on, beloved, and believe that through him you are more than enough, you are priceless, you are worthy, you are strong.

AUGUST 3

## *Afraid of the Dark*

“Mommy, will you leave the light on?” Many young children (and more than a few not-so-young ones) fear the dark. Why do you suppose that is? Though nothing bad may have ever happened to them in the dark, they instinctively recoil from places where they can’t see.

Perhaps we are not crazy about the dark, either. Whether it is a pile of Legos in our path or an imagined scary monster, we like to know what to expect, and we want the opportunity to avoid danger. God is that opportunity. Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12), and he is a light that never burns out or grows dim. We have nothing to fear.

*The LORD is my light and my salvation—  
whom shall I fear?*

*The LORD is the stronghold of my life—  
of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1, NIV)*

Find a dark place, the darkest you can find. Sit quietly in the darkness and see what fears or insecurities come to mind, then recite this verse. Imagine the Lord as a light, illuminating every corner of the space you occupy. Seeing clearly, give your fears to him, one by one.

AUGUST 4

## Whole Restoration

Our God is a God of restoration. He shows us his kindness, through his love, in that he cares for our entire being. Not only does God want to restore a right relationship with you, he also wants to restore your body to health.

When we are spiritually or physically weak, we can sometimes forget the promises of God. In these times, think on his character; remember that he is a loving Father who wants the best for you. Praise him with all of your heart, soul, and mind, and watch him bring restoration to the areas of your life that need it the most.

*My whole being, praise the LORD  
and do not forget all his kindnesses.  
He forgives all my sins  
and heals all my diseases (Psalm 103:2-3, NCV).*

Heavenly Father, I praise you with my whole being. I remember your kindness toward me, and I ask you to show me your mercy. Forgive my sins and renew my heart. Heal my body and restore my health.



AUGUST 5

## *Be Perfect?*

Mixed in with all the encouragement, all the unconditional love and acceptance from the Sermon on the Mount, is this impossible command: Be perfect. Why would Jesus say this, knowing we are powerless to comply? Don't we spend endless energy helping our children understand they are loved and wonderful just as they are? Don't we try to internalize that message for ourselves?

Taken out of context, this verse can be overwhelming, discouraging, and even alienating. However, when we visit the entire passage we see what Jesus is really asking of us.

*“If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:46-48, NLT).*

God loves everyone he ever created. The best way to show your love for him is to do the same. Who do you struggle to love? How about your children? It starts early, with battles over toys, and it only gets more challenging. Share your thoughts with God on loving the unlovable, and ask him to guide you through this vital lesson with your children.

AUGUST 6

## *Time with God*

A mother's time is not her own. It belongs to her family and her home. This is especially true when children are young and completely dependent on mom for everything. Time with God is a real need. Carving out that time in our day is a struggle. At the end of the day, all we crave is our soft bed and sleep. The truth is we can't wait for quiet to happen.

God is always there. How wonderful that we don't need to be physically alone to be alone with God. Talk to him while you are bathing your babies, washing dishes, driving carpools, and mopping the floor. He loves to listen. Our devotional times may look different now that we are mothers, but the need for God remains the same.

*Give all your worries to him, because he cares about you  
(1 Peter 5:7, NCV).*

Do you find it a struggle to connect with God as a mom? Time with him will restore and refresh you. It's more essential than that third or fourth cup of coffee in the middle of the day!

AUGUST 7

## *Any Prayer Counts*

Often we are too analytical with our prayers. We think we ought to make them sound fancy or humble. We can treat prayer like money: we don't want to spend it on the wrong things. We might not be able to trust our intentions when we pray, but God sees our heart.

The Lord wants you to talk with him in all occasions and with all kinds of prayers. Sometimes our prayer is a quick cry for help, and sometimes it is an hour-long worship session! No matter what kind of prayer, Jesus will always be present to hear you.

*Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests (Ephesians 6:18, NIV).*

Jesus, I don't always know how to pray, how short or how informal I can be, or what things are acceptable to pray for. I thank you for reminding me that it doesn't actually matter. What matters is that I open my heart to you at all times and acknowledge that I need you in any and every area of my life.



AUGUST 8

## *His Voice Is Diverse*

Sometimes an encouraging phone call, card, or message from a friend comes at exactly the right time. Maybe we've had a tough day with the kids and are feeling worn out when we check our voicemail and hear, "Give yourself time, patience, and grace today." Our eyes fill with tears because someone was thinking about us at the very moment that we didn't want to feel alone. That wasn't by chance.

God uses strangers, neighbors, friends, family, and even our children to convey his message of truth. He bestows wisdom to us in all forms. Usually these messages come as a breath of fresh air at just the time we need them.

*A generous person will prosper;  
whoever refreshes others will be refreshed (Proverbs 11:25, NIV).*

Are you that friend for others when they need God to speak through you? Who can you bless today with an encouraging word? When you're on the receiving end, embrace those gifts and take the messages to heart. Let them permeate your soul and breathe life into your lungs, so you can hear his voice amidst the chaos.

AUGUST 9

## *Plans for the Future*

We can rarely see our future clearly. Not knowing what is ahead can feel scary and unsettling, especially when making decisions that concern what's coming next. God tells us that we shouldn't worry. He assures us that he has a plan for us—and a good one at that.

That assurance doesn't only belong to us. Those little ones underfoot that we love so much and spend hours worrying about their futures? God has a plan for them as well. We wonder what type of person they will become, what school they will go to, and who they will marry. God's future for them is better than anything we can plan for them ourselves.

*“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me” (John 14:6, NLT).*

Are you entrusting your children and their futures into God's hands? Rest easy and know that even though you can't map out a step-by-step plan for your future or theirs, God's got both covered.

AUGUST 10

## Quenched

There are times in life when we feel like we are always striving and never getting anywhere; where we thirst for something more but still feel dry. God has promised that there will be a day when we, the redeemed, will no longer thirst for fulfillment; when everything we desire will be satisfied.

Before that day, however, God is still willing and able to grant you an oasis in the desert and give you signs of life in whatever kind of “wilderness” you may be experiencing. Just like the promise Jesus made to the woman at the well, the water that he gives is everlasting and becomes in us a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

*The desert and the parched land will be glad;  
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom (Isaiah 35:1, NIV).*

God, thank you for the water that you give to satisfy my soul. I want to draw from your everlasting well so that I can endure the desert moments and experience growth in the times of wilderness.



AUGUST 11

## Tongue Control

How many words have you spoken in your life that you wish you could take back? Few things are more convicting or heartbreaking than the first time it happens with our children.

The minute the words leave our mouths, we know we should have held them inside. And we know this because we probably still remember some of the more hurtful words or unsolicited, unhelpful advice offered up by our own parents. It's hard, but it's so important that we get this one right.

*The tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do. A great forest can be set on fire by one tiny spark. And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is full of wickedness, and poisons every part of the body. And the tongue is set on fire by hell itself and can turn our whole lives into a blazing flame of destruction and disaster (James 3:5-6, TLB).*

In general, do you find it difficult or easy to control your tongue? In what situations do you find yourself needing restraint with your words? Ask Jesus to give you the power to speak words that build up, encourage, and bring light—and for the power to hold your tongue in the moments those edifying words won't come.

AUGUST 12

## *Danger of Discontentment*

Staying content is a struggle, isn't it? It is a choice to find joy in the place we currently are. Contentment allows us to see beauty in situations that are less than ideal. It keeps us grounded, and it grows a thankful heart.

The danger of discontentment is the temptation for our hearts to wander off of God's course. It allows bitterness to darken the brightest corners of our souls. It tempts us to make decisions that aren't in accordance to God's Word. These decisions can bring trouble and destruction. It's important to be aware of small seeds of discontent trying to take root in our hearts.

*I am not telling you this because I need anything. I have learned to be satisfied with the things I have and with everything that happens. I know how to live when I am poor, and I know how to live when I have plenty. I have learned the secret of being happy at any time in everything that happens, when I have enough to eat and when I go hungry, when I have more than I need and when I do not have enough (Philippians 4:11-12, NCV).*

Are you finding it hard to be content? God wants you to be content because it protects you from stumbling. He knows how easily your wants and desires can overtake your judgment. Trust him to give you everything you need; then you can be content whether you have little or much!

AUGUST 13

## Fiery Furnace

What confidence Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had in God's power to rescue them from the blazing furnace! Not only did they refuse to worship the king's idol, they willingly went through the fire to prove the power of their God.

You are unlikely to have to go through literal flames for God, but he will honor your decision to stand up for your faith in him. You may feel pressured by the majority to live a certain way, to accept other religions, and to compromise your standards. Be encouraged that our God is the God who miraculously saved these faithful men from the fire, and he is the only one worthy of praise.

*"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty" (Daniel 3:17, NLT).*

Dear God, give me faith as strong as these three men. Help me to stand against the idols of this world and to hold fast to my belief in you. I want to serve you for the rest of my days, and I ask for your protection along the way.



AUGUST 14

## *What Is Required?*

As a mother, it feels like there are many things required of us. Sometimes it's hard to tell the essentials from things that are imposed on us by others. The basics are obvious. We need to meet the fundamental needs of our families. But beyond that, what other requirements are before us? Our close relationships legitimately require our time.

Does God require something of us too? What makes him happy? We can be encouraged that what God wants of us is much more simple than we think. He's not looking for a supermom. He's looking for a humble mom that boasts in him.

*The LORD has told you what is good,  
and this is what he requires of you:  
to do what is right, to love mercy,  
and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8, NLT).*

Have you asked the Lord what he requires of you? No flesh will glory in his presence. You don't have to wonder what he wants. He wants your heart.

AUGUST 15

## *The Product of Suffering*

The day we become mothers, we realize we'd gladly take any pain this sweet, perfect baby ever encounters onto ourselves. As a result, few things are more tortuous to a mom than watching her child go through trials.

We want to fix it, whatever "it" is, and make sure our children never, ever have to know the pain of illness, injury, loss, or failure. But we can't. And more importantly, we shouldn't. To let them become the amazing children of God they are meant to be, we have to be willing to let them hurt.

*We know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope (Romans 5:3-4, NIV).*

What hurts worse, living through your own pain or watching your child suffer? As painful as it is, hang on to the truth of Romans 5:3-4, and know that whatever they are going through, it is helping them become the people God designed them to be.

AUGUST 16

## Search Me

Searching requires looking in every place available to see what is there. Asking God to search your heart means that you are inviting him to know everything that is in it. Vulnerability is hard, particularly when we are battling pride or when we want to hide painful feelings or even sin.

Of course, God already knows your heart, so there is no point in hiding from him. But when you invite him in, you are acknowledging that you might need him to show you things in your heart and mind that need his love and guidance. Know that as you surrender to him, his love will cover all wrong, and he will lead you in the everlasting way.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;  
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,  
And lead me in the everlasting way (Psalm 139:23-24, NASB).*

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Help me to put aside my anxious thoughts and hurtful ways. I want to be led in your everlasting way.



AUGUST 17

## *Sin Separates*

We all fail and we all sin. Often our sins against those closest to us seem to be more pronounced. We might say or do things to our children that we would never say to a perfect stranger or even a close friend. Close relationships reveal our weaknesses much more clearly. Because we're often with them, we can't escape the proverbial mirror that they frequently hold before our eyes.

God takes our sins seriously because he knows it separates us from him. But he paid the price and suffered punishment on our behalf. He only asks that we repent and turn to him quickly; we don't secure anything but further separation by waiting.

*You are not pleased by sacrifices, or I would give them.*

*You don't want burnt offerings.*

*The sacrifice God wants is a broken spirit.*

*God, you will not reject a heart that is broken and sorry  
for sin (Psalm 51:16-17, NCV).*

Don't forget that God's love covers a multitude of sins. He bore it all for you so you don't have to. Enjoy the forgiveness that your repentance will usher in. Give him your broken and contrite heart; he will do the rest.

AUGUST 18

## Heard

When we face trouble, our immediate reaction is to fix the problem. We are geared toward solving issues. However, we are powerless to solve some problems that we face and find ourselves defeated. But we aren't. There is power in calling out to Jesus.

We can go boldly to God with our needs and requests and he will hear us. No problem is bigger than God, and he doesn't consider our requests insignificant. He deeply cares for each of us and will go as far as to calm raging waters for us.

*Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he delivered them from their distress.  
He made the storm be still,  
and the waves of the sea were hushed.  
Then they were glad that the waters were quiet,  
and he brought them to their desired haven (Psalm 107:28-30, ESV).*

Do you go boldly to God in your time of need? There is such love and comfort in knowing he hears your cries and they aren't ignored.

AUGUST 19

## Gracious

We can become so overwhelmed by our own shame, troubles, or misconceptions that we miss out on the most simple and beautiful truth—our God greatly desires to show us grace. He doesn't long to show us his anger or his punishment. He doesn't rise up to show us his power and his terrible greatness; he rises up to show us compassion.

When we enter God's presence with this point of view, we are humbled by his love despite his justice—because the punishment we deserve has been outweighed by the grace he longs to give.

*Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you;  
therefore he will rise up to show you compassion.  
For the LORD is a God of justice.  
Blessed are all who wait for him! (Isaiah 30:18, NIV)*

I am humbled by the power of your grace for me. Help me to wait for you and to always rely on your grace and your compassion more than my own strength and capacity for goodness.



AUGUST 20

## *A Respectable Job*

Sweet mother, has the world tarnished the way you view motherhood? In case you hadn't noticed, it's not a position that is highly honored. In fact, it's almost shameful to fully give ourselves to mothering our children. We are expected to do so much more than simply parent. We are expected to also hold down a *respectable job* to show our worth and value.

God wants us to know that he sees us. Every sleepless night, the burn in our muscles from holding our babies, and the monotony of daily chores have not gone unnoticed by him. He sees it all. It is the lifestyle of a servant—always working behind the scenes to make others successful. We must know that servant-hood was the very lifestyle he chose for himself.

*“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12, ESV).*

Jesus made himself remarkably low to serve you. Many people don't see what you do, but the one who judges rightly does. And his opinion is all that matters!

AUGUST 21

## *The Ideal Wardrobe*

Did you remember to put on your compassion this morning? Did you slip into your humility, and zip up your discipline?

Not even the cutest boots, most flattering jeans, or perfect shade of lipstick will make us shine as brightly as a mom dressed head-to-toe in love.

*God has chosen you and made you his holy people. He loves you. So you should always clothe yourselves with mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other, and forgive each other. If someone does wrong to you, forgive that person because the Lord forgave you. Even more than all this, clothe yourself in love. Love is what holds you all together in perfect unity (Colossians 3:12-14, NCV).*

What would happen if you consciously applied these attributes the way you apply makeup or choose accessories before you leave your room each day? Ask God which of these your family most needs from you, and let it be the first thing you dress in tomorrow.

AUGUST 22

## *Enduring Hardship*

Creating a diamond is, for the transforming coal, a long and painful process. Simple carbon undergoes an immense refining pressure that produces a wholly new creation. We might just see a cloudy rock at this stage, but there is another refining step to be taken. After the stone-cutter does his work, a precise shining diamond emerges: magnificent, glittering, brilliant.

When we endure hardship, the long and painful process can seem unfair. But our life stories are written by a compassionate Creator who is crafting a masterpiece. He is refining us, like the diamond, into something entirely beyond our imagination. And we can rejoice in the beauty he is creating. You may not see it now, but it's coming soon.

*Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything (James 1:4, NIV).*

Father, show me the emerging beauty under the surface of the hardships I face. I submit to your process and trust your skilled and loving hands. Let me come out of this situation stronger and brighter, shining for you.



AUGUST 23

## *A Woman's Closet*

As women, there are often different clothes we need to wear: the apron for cooking and doing the dishes, the referee shirt for breaking up sibling fights, the scrubs for nursing a sick child, the heels for the fancy work party, and the workout clothes when we're burning off steam at the gym. We wear our pajamas on rainy inside days, and our hats when it has been at least four days since we've had a chance to wash our hair. But one of the most important pieces of clothing we can put on is stated in Proverbs. Strength and dignity.

Wearing strength can look different for everyone, but we know that strength comes from the Lord. When we feel like we can't even put the shirt over our heads, God will do it for us, giving us the unwavering strength we are praying for.

*She is clothed with strength and dignity;  
she can laugh at the days to come (Proverbs 31:25, NIV).*

What pieces of clothing do you wear the most? Do you know that those pieces of clothing are valuable? They are part of the beautiful creature you are as a woman. Whether your closet has only a few pieces in it, or a lot, it is a closet worth cherishing.

AUGUST 24

## *A Mother's Comfort*

When the prophet Isaiah shares God's promises for the restoration of Jerusalem and the church, he invokes the metaphor of a mother. When promising the utmost degree of love and comfort, our Father compares himself to a mother.

Marvel at the gentle power we possess to quiet tears, banish a nightmare, or reassure after an argument with a friend. We are moms. We are the ultimate place of safety and comfort for our children. And when we need that peace and comfort for ourselves, we have God's promise.

*“As a mother comforts her child,  
so I will comfort you” (Isaiah 66:13, NIV).*

It's easy to get wrapped up in being a safety net for others that we forget about ourselves. Where do you go when you need comfort? Is there a nagging worry or concern that you could let go of right now, and let God draw you in his arms instead?

AUGUST 25

## *Garment of Praise*

Have you ever looked into a child's grumpy face and demanded that they don't smile? Even the most stubborn child can often be coaxed out of their funk by a few tickles or funny faces. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for adults. Imagine trying to change the attitude of a crotchety older woman with the same method. The picture is somewhat ridiculous.

When life's situations get us down, and all around us is darkness and depression, it takes a great deal of faith to choose praise. But often that's the only thing that can really pull us out of those dark moments. When we choose to thank God for his goodness and grace, we can't help but see life in a more positive light. As we praise God, our focus shifts from ourselves to him.

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
and his courts with praise.*

*Give thanks to him, bless his name.*

*For the LORD is good;*

*his steadfast love endures forever,*

*and his faithfulness to all generations (Psalm 100:4-5, NRSV).*

God, you don't only deserve my praise when life is going well. You are worthy of my adoration every second of every day. Today I choose to put on a garment of praise.



AUGUST 26

## *Finding Identity*

Upon meeting someone for the first time, one of the first questions we ask is, “What do you do?” In our culture there is great importance placed on who we are and what we do. Moms feel the pressure of defining their identity, and measuring up to society’s standards. There are hundreds of personality tests to help us determine who we are. These tests, however, are incapable of giving us an accurate description, which is the reason why some of us find ourselves on a continual search to discover who we are.

The answers are closer than we think. They are in Scripture. It doesn’t matter how the world perceives us; all that matters is how God sees us.

*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9, ESV).*

Who do you let define you? You are a child of God. You are free. You are chosen.

AUGUST 27

## *Sleepless for a Season*

Are your children still waking up a lot during the night? Sometimes it's not just a hungry baby; it's a feverish child who needs medicine, or a scared toddler that doesn't know why the shadows on their walls are moving. Whatever the reason, often it's a mother's job to interrupt her own precious sleep to care for her children.

When this happens on a regular basis, extreme exhaustion can take place. What we mothers desperately need is sleep, but sometimes it really isn't an option. So, what should we do? The Lord wants us to know that he really will sustain us. It's possible to make an idol out of our missed hours of sleep—constantly counting up the missed hours and almost obsessing with how tired we are.

*I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit (Ephesians 3:16, NLT).*

Take a moment to ask God for his strength. Ask God to help you focus on him and not the sleep you long for. You will find that he has creative ways to energize you, even without sleep. And know that this season isn't forever. It also will pass.

AUGUST 28

## *Everything I Do*

“Look at me! Look at me! Watch this!” Oh how often children seek recognition from just about anyone who will watch. Even though the dive bomb into the water looks exactly the same as it did last time, or the cartwheel is still lopsided after thirty attempts, onlookers continue to encourage the repetitious behavior. Are we really very different from those children? Don’t we also look for recognition in life? We want someone to notice our efforts, our charity, our diligence, our excellence. And, though we hate to admit it, we may even get a little upset if nobody does.

We can choose to search for recognition from others, or we can believe that God sees everything we do. Because he does. He is interested in that project we worked so hard on. He is delighted when we spend our time serving others. He loves it when we do our very best.

*Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up (Galatians 6:9, ESV).*

God, I don’t want to waste my time trying to be recognized by others. I want to share what I have without holding back, knowing that you have your eye on me and you don’t look away.



AUGUST 29

## No More Fun

Whether we grow up knowing and loving Jesus our whole lives and never stray, or whether we come to him later, we all face a time where we wonder if we can follow him and still have fun.

Does loving Christ mean sacrificing our freedom? Particularly with older children, this is a genuine concern. Are we choosing a long list of rules when we choose him? Far from it! This is one of the most beautiful lessons we can share with our kids. A life with Jesus is a life filled with freedom.

*“I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life” (John 10:9-10, NLT).*

With the Holy Spirit in your life, you are given free reign. Nothing is off limits, because nothing has any power over you once you give control of your heart to Christ. He will fill you with desire for what he desires. Do you believe this? Spend some time considering how to apply this to your life and how to help your children apply it to theirs.

AUGUST 30

## *Never Abandoned*

In a perfect world, every child would have a mother and a father to love and protect them. Families would never be broken. Abandonment would be a stranger to our hearts. Sadly, too many of us know the pain of being left behind, of being forgotten, of being unwanted and discarded as worthless.

These experiences can leave us severely hurt and broken. They might even keep us from pursuing deep relationships. Abandonment causes us to be wary of letting others in. We settle for mediocre relationships in attempt to protect ourselves.

*“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged” (Deuteronomy 31:8, NIV).*

Do you tend to keep God at arm's length? Are you fearful of being hurt? People will fail you, but God will never abandon you. You can trust that his love for you is strong. You are his treasure. He will keep you close. Reach out to him, and allow his love to heal those wounds.

AUGUST 31

## Full Joy

The joy that comes with the presence of the Lord is a joy that cannot be taken away. When we remember what Christ has done for us, and think about how his grace has changed the eternal course of our lives, we cannot help but be filled with an irrepressible joy.

We may struggle on difficult days, when our lives get hard, to keep sight of the joy of our salvation. But a day is coming when Jesus will return to this earth—setting all things right—and on that day, we will experience our joy in full.

*“So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (John 16:22, NRSV).*

Thank you, Jesus, for the joy of my salvation. Thank you that, in your presence, my joy cannot be taken away from me. I look forward to the day when I will see you face to face, in fullness of joy.





# SEPTEMBER

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable  
for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for  
training in righteousness.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16, NASB



SEPTEMBER 1

## *Are You Shining?*

Lights from major cities like Los Angeles, Nashville, and Atlanta can be seen from space. In fact, their brilliance increases 50% more during the holiday season! These cities simply cannot be hidden.

As believers, we are to be a light, shining for all to see. If there ever was a time in history where the beacon of light needed to illumine the darkness, it is now! We dare not hide behind the façade of political correctness and fear, but rather speak and live in the luminance of Christ's truth. We have the light of the world living in us and we know the truth that sets us free.

*"You are the light of the world.*

*A city set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14, ESV).*

Lord, shine through me this day. Give me courage to speak and live according to your Word, no matter what the world may say. I want your glow to radiate through me.



SEPTEMBER 2

## *Individually Designed*

Do you remember the first time your child surprised you? Few things are more delightful than watching our little babies become little people. Personalities emerge, opinions form, and what God has known all along begins to unfold.

In this light, parenting can be seen as a long process of becoming acquainted with our children. What a gift! They will be both like us and entirely unique, and we must strive to embrace both. They got our dimples, but not our love of music. Their eyes are just like ours, and so is their need to always be right. They are ours to nurture and love, but first, last, and always, they are his.

*My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place,  
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes saw my unformed body;  
all the days ordained for me were written in your book  
before one of them came to be (Psalm 139:15-16, NIV).*

What fascinates you about your children? What delights you?  
What are you learning about who God has designed them to be?



SEPTEMBER 3

## *A Wealth of Wisdom*

Motherhood encompasses so many things. It is filled with so much joy and many blessings. However, it is undeniably a huge undertaking that is both physically and emotionally taxing. The world is quick to tell us how-to and how-not-to parent, but essentially we enter into the role of motherhood without a manual or a clear instruction guide. It is impossible to prepare for every unique parenting challenge that may come our way.

Yet we need not fear. God is the perfect parent and teacher. His wisdom is ours for the taking. All we have to do is ask him. In every situation, in every decision made, we are not without help.

*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, NIV).*

You don't have to depend on your minimal experience; you can rely on God's infinite knowledge. What parenting questions do you want to ask him today?

SEPTEMBER 4

## *A Basket Case*

People in developing countries typically have few options when a heavy load of some kind must be moved. In Africa, a tribal woman can carry up to 70% of her body weight on the top of her head. Physical burdens are—yes—burdensome and require strength and stamina.

Spiritual and emotional burdens are the same. The heaviness and fatigue of the soul can bring depression and even a loss of hope. There is great news, however! We have a burden bearer—one who is well equipped and ready to remove our hands from our heavy load! Our responsibility is to let him do it. Put all of your concerns, worries, fears, and doubts into God's mighty basket and let him haul it away! You don't have to be a basket case!

*“I took the load off their shoulders;  
I let them put down their baskets” (Psalm 81:6, NCV).*

Lord, today I'm placing all of my concerns into your ample basket. I release it to your care. As you solve all these issues, let me know how to proceed one step at a time. Thank you for being my burden bearer!

SEPTEMBER 5

## *Bridging the Gap*

Do you ever feel like there is an enormous gap between what you know to be true in God's Word and what you feel to be true? Our feelings are so fickle. They fluctuate depending on our circumstances, much as our moods change with the weather. The good news is that they don't change facts! God promises strength, wisdom, peace, hope, direction, comfort, forgiveness, courage, eternal life, and so much more. These are unchangeable—they are written in stone.

How do we move from the tyranny of emotions to the confidence of faith? We must determine to believe what God says instead of what our emotions say, and then declare his promises aloud! Then we do it again and again and again until faith rises and bridges the gap.

*Faith is the confidence that what we hope  
for will actually happen; it gives us assurance  
about things we cannot see (Hebrews 11:1, NLT).*

Lord, your Word is true and I know it. Right now, I feel so alone and frightened even though I know you promise never to leave me or forsake me. I choose to believe the truth. Help me now by the power of your Spirit.



SEPTEMBER 6

## City without Walls

In grade school, we had to wait to speak until our hand was raised. The teacher would not call on a single student until she had finished talking. The children could barely wait another second before blurting out the answer. These teachers were wise. They were trying to teach self-control—a valuable life lesson.

Lack of self-control comes in a variety of forms: overeating, spending too much time on the computer or phone, losing our tempers, wasting money, gossiping, and the list goes on. Self-control is an area that requires discipline. In order to perfect it, we need to practice and ask God for help. Proverbs 25:28 describes a man without self-control as a city broken into and left without walls. What an easy way to let the enemy in.

*The grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age (Titus 2:11-12, NIV).*

Which areas in your life require you to practice more self-control? Who can you be accountable to? Ask for help today in the area of self-control. Bring your weakness into the light and find the help you need in the Lord.

SEPTEMBER 7

## *Held Together*

Often life seems to be a conglomeration of unrelated activities and we feel pulled in a thousand directions simultaneously. Loose ends, unfinished business, and to-do lists leave us feeling a day late and a dollar short. Frustration, discouragement, and anxiety often overwhelm. The apostle Paul must have experienced something similar when he was on a ship headed to Jerusalem to be tried in court. An enormous storm raged. In an effort to survive, the sailors wrapped ropes around the body of the ship to keep it from falling apart. God promised Paul that all would survive the wreck, and they did!

What an amazing truth it is to know that it is not our job to hold our lives together. Our responsibility is to submit our to-do list to God, bow to his will, and let him hold it all together. He is the rope that holds us fast.

*He is before all things,  
and in him all things hold together (Colossians 1:17, NIV).*

Lord, thank you that you are the glue that keeps me together. Today as I face the impossible list of my responsibilities, I submit to your will and ask you to hold everything in place.

SEPTEMBER 8

## *The Protector*

From the first time someone else holds our precious new babies, our thoughts fix on their safety. Is she using both hands? Remember that first car trip? How many times did you look back at your (probably sleeping) baby? Were you leaning back as you drove, one hand on the car seat, making sure no turn was too sharp or stop too sudden?

God feels that same way about our children—and about us. There is nothing he won't do to protect his children. He is right there even when we can't be. So go ahead and drive with both hands; he's got this.

*“When you pass through the waters,  
I will be with you;  
and when you pass through the rivers,  
they will not sweep over you.  
When you walk through the fire,  
you will not be burned;  
the flames will not set you ablaze” (Isaiah 43:2, NIV).*

Is it comfortable and natural for you to entrust your children to others, or do you struggle to let go? How about with God? Share your heart with him; ask him to strengthen your confidence, and thank him for how very much he loves you and yours.



SEPTEMBER 9

## *Rest for the Weary*

Can you remember the last time you were alone? I mean really alone. Free from any demands and distractions in a quiet cozy corner of your own to breathe deeply? It is difficult to function well when our hearts and minds are full of noise and chaos. The only way we can possibly operate is to give space for quiet and peace to make a home deep within us.

Stealing away for some peaceful moments is vital to being a good mom. We get so busy taking care of others that we often forget to take care of ourselves.

*“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29, NLT).*

Do you feel fatigued? Making time with the Lord so he can recharge you is a wonderful gift you can give to your children. Schedule it into your day guilt free.

SEPTEMBER 10

## Starting Over

Have you ever wished you could have a do-over? It would be so great to turn back the clock, reverse a decision, and do it differently. There is so much more wisdom in looking back! Yes, there are some things we can do over, like tweak the recipe or rip the seam, but most often, the important big decisions can't be changed.

Except when it comes to spiritual things. God tells us that we can start over every morning because his mercies will be there. Whatever went awry the day before, whatever mess we made from poor choices, we can begin the next day with a completely clean slate! There does not need to be any carryover of yesterday's mistakes. Our part in the transaction may require repentance of sin or forgiving someone, perhaps even ourselves. Bathed in his mercies, we can begin each day squeaky clean!

*Praise the LORD!*

*Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good!*

*For His mercy endures forever (Psalm 106:1, NKJV).*

Lord, I am so grateful that your love and your mercies never end. You extend them to me brand new every morning! Great is your faithfulness!

SEPTEMBER 11

## *Blessed in Mourning*

There can be many sources of grief. There may have been a death, or maybe it was the loss of something else: a job, a dream, a friendship. Grief seems to come without warning or invitation. It takes over our homes and lives in almost every facet.

It is critical during this season that we let the Lord lead us. He asks nothing more than for us to lie in his strong arms. As we lay there, he will faithfully whisper words of comfort. When we're in this state of grief, he calls us *blessed*. That's right. Read Matthew 5:4. He calls us blessed because he knows he is going to pour a measure of comfort over us that we wouldn't receive otherwise. That comfort will sustain us when it seems nothing else will.

*Weeping may last through the night,  
but joy comes with the morning (Psalm 30:5, NLT).*

Has grief entered your home? Let God be your comfort. His comfort is tailor-made to your pain and your hurt. Let him hold you and bless you. Place your hope in his promise that joy will come in the morning.



SEPTEMBER 12

## *A Season of Waiting*

Being in a season of waiting can be trying. When our flesh desires the next thing, and God has a different plan, we might feel our trust waver in weakness. We might cry out in frustration or get angry at the tiniest of things. Our flesh can be our biggest adversary. It has desires that are ungodly, wants that are unnecessary, and longings that just aren't right for us. This is where faith comes in.

Believing in something we can't see isn't for the faint of heart. It takes prayer, a listening ear, and trust. There is a beautiful gift to unwavering trust in God; we can give up control because there is nothing we can do anyway. There is no point in frantically worrying because he has decided for us. He will gladly take that burden from us.

*In their hearts humans plan their course,  
but the Lord establishes their steps (Proverbs 16:9, NIV).*

Do you have an unwavering trust in God that he has determined your life plan? Trusting in a God who loves you unconditionally and has your best interests at the forefront of his mind is an incredible place to rest.

SEPTEMBER 13

## Isolation

In the depths of motherhood, it is easy to feel isolated from the rest of the world—especially when days are more hard than easy.

We are not alone. He is there when we rock our babies in the early morning light, groggy without sleep. He sees us slaving over the stove with a toddler fussing at our feet and a baby on our hip. He surrounds us when we are anxious over a feverish child. He is with us as we wait for our teenagers to come home after curfew. God knows every worry and thought. And every sacrifice given.

*Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully (Ephesians 3:17-19, NLT).*

Do you feel alone today? Remember that everything you do is accounted for: God sees every kiss, every hug, every extra bedtime story read, every sleepless night and early morning. You are not alone. Ask God to make his presence known to you.

SEPTEMBER 14

## *Most Beautiful of All*

If there is one thing that we can appreciate, it's something pretty. Shiny things easily catch our attention, and we seek to surround ourselves with beauty. There is much beauty to be found in our natural world.

There is nothing wrong with finding loveliness in our world, but if there is one thing that is more beautiful than anything else, it is the Lord God himself. His love, his mercy, his grace, and his understanding—it is nothing short of breathtaking.

*Here's the one thing I crave from God,  
the one thing I seek above all else:  
I want the privilege of living with him  
every moment in his house,  
finding the sweet loveliness of his face,  
filled with awe, delighting in his glory and grace.  
I want to live my life so close to him  
that he takes pleasure in my every prayer (Psalm 27:4, TPT).*

Lord, I don't want to miss your beauty today. I seek after it because I know it can be found. You created me to enjoy all that is exquisite, beautiful, and captivating—and that is you! Nothing is better than you and your love.



SEPTEMBER 15

## *Supported by Love*

As moms, we practice giving copious amounts of love away. In the early years we are in the season of pouring our love on our children daily. This includes long hours in the morning when our muscles burn from holding an infant, long hours in the afternoon reading repetitive books, and long hours in the night when we are awakened by lonely, sick, hungry, or scared children.

We do it because we love them. We do it because love, by its very definition, lays its life down for others. But on many days, our love tanks run dry. We feel hungry, lonely, or sick. When we go into the bathroom to steal ninety seconds of quiet, it's imperative that we go to our good Father and ask him to fill us by pouring his love back into us. And he will.

*When I said, "My foot is slipping,"  
your unfailing love, LORD, supported me (Psalm 94:18, NIV).*

Do you need your love tank filled? You will never be found in want when you ask.

SEPTEMBER 16

## *Giving Up Control*

We are made to be different, but we all fit into categories with certain areas of our life: some are worriers, some are romantics, some are planners, and some are controllers. Some of us cannot give up control of the little things or the big things. We like to know exactly what is going to happen, when, and how. We want to know where our children will be at all hours of the day. We have massive calendars with every half-hour detailed out. We balance our checkbooks to the cent. We have our ten-year life plan. And then it happens: an unexpected occurrence.

What do we do then? There isn't much we can do besides letting it go. We can release the burden of misunderstanding to God. We can have unwavering trust in the Father who loves us. There is someone at work in us who knows us best and has a specific purpose for our lives.

*You can make many plans,  
but the Lord's purpose will prevail (Proverbs 19:21, NLT).*

Have you had an unexpected life event where unwavering trust in God was your only option? How did that prepare your heart for future events that were out of your control?

SEPTEMBER 17

## Chorus of Love

Oh, the many ways in which we sin! We are full of mistakes. We make so many poor choices. The list of ways in which we fall short is endless.

If we are truly repentant, we don't need to spend time beating ourselves up over the mistakes we make. We get to say we're sorry and then move on. Scripture tells us that the Lord takes great delight in us! When Jesus died to save us from our sins, there was no longer need for rebuke. Instead, he rejoices over us with singing! Can you imagine? The very God who saved us is so thrilled about it that he sings us a song.

*"The LORD your God is with you,  
the Mighty Warrior who saves.  
He will take great delight in you;  
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,  
but will rejoice over you with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17, NIV).*

Lord, thank you for the chorus you sing over me. The very fact that I exist gives you great pleasure. I repent of my sin, and rejoice with you today!



SEPTEMBER 18

## *Just Be There*

As a mother, few things hurt more than seeing our children suffer. We want to take away their pain, to tell them better days are coming. When they are little, this can often be done. The skinned knees and broken toys of childhood lead inevitably to bigger problems—problems we can't always solve.

The more mature and independent these beings we are blessed to love and nurture become, the harder it becomes to know what to do or even to say when they are hurting. Maybe that's ok. Maybe just our presence is enough.

*Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was (Job 2:13, NIV).*

Do you struggle with wanting to fix everything for your children? How do you handle it when you can't? As the story of Job continues, his friends turn to that strategy with disastrous effect. Ask God to show you when just your presence, your love, and prayers are all your children need from you.

SEPTEMBER 19

## Loving Enemies

Love your enemy. We've all heard it, but how do we live it? It's a baffling command; an enemy is defined as someone actively opposed to you. How will you help your children when it comes time for them to face—and to love—someone who wants to see them fail?

To show love to someone engaged in trying to topple us requires superhuman strength. Do we have superhuman strength? Do our children? None of us does, yet Jesus tells us we must. He wants us to be set apart, so others will know he lives in us. We must rely on the Holy Spirit, move out of the way, and let his love rule our hearts.

*“But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!”*  
(Matthew 5:44, *NLT*)

What might the world look like if all God's children spent a portion of their day praying for anyone who might wish them harm? What would the world see in you, or in your kids, if you chose to live this way? Share your thoughts on this with God.

SEPTEMBER 20

## *Embracing Weakness*

Do you ever find yourself suddenly aware of your own glaring weaknesses? Aware that, if left up to your own good works, you wouldn't stand a chance of attaining salvation? We should find great comfort in the fact that we are nothing without salvation in Christ Jesus.

Thankfully, God made a way for us to be united with him, despite impatience, selfishness, anger, and pride. God deeply cares for us and patiently sustains us with steady, faithful, and adoring love. Amazingly, his love even goes beyond this to embrace and transform our weakness when we yield it to him. Weakness isn't something to be feared or hidden; weakness submitted to God allows the power of Christ to work in and through us.

*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord,  
and He will lift you up (James 4:10, NKJV).*

God, knowing my weakness makes me more aware of my need for your strength. I humbly ask you to be strong where I am weak. Thank you that your transformative love is waiting to graciously restore me.



SEPTEMBER 21

## Mentorship

Most expectant mothers in our culture are thrown a baby shower. Along with gifts of diapers, toys, and clothes, they are also handed a ton of advice from seasoned mothers.

“It takes a village to raise a child.” This is such a true expression. Sometimes we don’t have all the answers, but there is always a mom who has walked this road ahead of us. That experience gives her wisdom and perspective from a road already traveled. Instead of determining to figure it all out on our own, it is good to ask questions and glean wisdom from others. They are our God-given village.

*[Older women] can teach the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be wise and pure, to be good workers at home, to be kind (Titus 2:4-5, NCV).*

Who in your life can you glean wisdom and learning from? Seek these women out. They are eager to lend a hand and lighten your load. Embrace them, cry on their shoulders, and appreciate their compassionate hearts. They are a wonderful gift to all who are willing to accept help and learn.

SEPTEMBER 22

## *Intentionally Present*

Life is a blur—especially when we have little ones underfoot. It is only natural for us to dream about what is to come. We ponder a new move, a new job, an addition to the family. We find ourselves saying, “When she is older, I’ll be less tired” or “When I get promoted, my finances will get back on track” or “When the spring comes, I’ll go back to the gym.” And so the cycle continues.

God’s blessings are in the here and now—today. Tomorrow will come soon enough. How would our perspective of life change if we chose to be intentional about being present in each day? Would we make better decisions? Would we become more aware of the gifts God has already given us? Would we invest more into the relationships around us?

If we always seek after what is to come, even good things, we will lose sight of what we already have. We lose the ability to soak in life around us.

*This is the day the LORD has made;  
We will rejoice and be glad in it (Psalm 118:24, NKJV).*

Are you always looking ahead? Stop what you are doing and enjoy the moment. Fully appreciate and live in the present. How can you slow down and appreciate the now?

SEPTEMBER 23

## *Your Eyes Will See*

On the difficult days when our faith is weak, our tears flow freely, and our hearts are discouraged, we wish just to see God. We think that if we could look into his eyes, have the chance to ask him our deepest questions—and hear them answered—then we could continue on.

Beloved, the reality of heaven is closer than we can imagine. We will see our King, in all his greatness and his beauty. We will look upon that distant land of heaven. We will one day dwell there in peace: with every question answered and every tear dried.

*Your eyes will see the King in His beauty;  
They will behold a far-distant land (Isaiah 33:17, NASB).*

Thank you, God, that you have promised heaven to me through my belief in your Son. Thank you that I will see your face one day and walk with you in your kingdom. When the days are hard, help me to remember that in just a little while all will be well and I will be with you.



SEPTEMBER 24

## Mom Advice

It is easy to make our children feel disrespected. Their actions and attitudes bother us, so we start to challenge them on everything they say and do. It is hard to avoid because we want our children to be successful in life. We think we're helping them by heaping on the mom advice. But that advice can lead us down a path of nagging and belittlement.

We need to accept that our children are in the process of learning. This means we choose to build them up with encouragement instead of tearing them down when they make mistakes. And they will make mistakes. All the mom advice in the world isn't going to stop our children from failing, and it might be more hurtful than helpful sometimes. Instead, we should be there to pick them up when they do fail, and lovingly teach them how to be successful next time.

*The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish pulls it down with her hands (Proverbs 14:1, NKJV).*

What is one tangible way you can encourage or build your children up today? If you choose to encourage your children when they fail, they will be more receptive to your advice next time. In fact, they might even seek you out for it.

SEPTEMBER 25

## Unhindered

Our salvation awards us the great privilege of being able to approach God unhindered. With sin no longer dividing us from his holy presence, we are free to bare our souls to God as his beloved sons and daughters.

As bold and confident lovers of God, there is nothing we cannot share with him—and he with us. Fear and shame have no place in this kind of excellent love.

*Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence (Ephesians 3:12, NLT).*

I love you, Lord. I praise you that you made a way for me to love you unhindered. I don't want my fear and my shame to interrupt our relationship—so I ask you to take it from me. Show me what it means to be a bold and confident child of yours.

SEPTEMBER 26

## *The Family of Jesus*

You may come from a traditional family or a pieced-together family. You may have been adopted, abandoned,

or put through the foster system. Whatever your story, when you accepted Jesus Christ into your life as your Lord and Savior, you were welcomed into one big, happy family. Isn't that a beautiful picture? People gathered together, doing the will of God, rejoicing in togetherness for one purpose—to glorify God.

Whatever your life story up to the point of accepting Jesus, let it be your past and not your present or your future. If you were lost, you are found in Christ. If you were broken, you are being put back together. If you were a mess, you are being pruned and reshaped. If you were alone, you are surrounded by a body of believers.

*[Jesus] remarked, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" He pointed to his disciples. "Look!" he said, "these are my mother and brothers." Then he added, "Anyone who obeys my Father in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother!" (Matthew 12:48-50, TLB)*

What was your family like before you became a believer? What is your new family like? Does it give you peace to know you are accepted into the family of Christ?



SEPTEMBER 27

## *Just Rest*

Picture a season in your life where you were knee-deep in busyness, swallowed in sadness, or buried in exhaustion. Picture that season and how you looked, how you acted, how you reacted, how you survived. Now picture Jesus. See his face, feel his warmth, envision his smile. Picture yourself back in that same tiresome season, sitting on a chair in your house, desiring to spend time with God but being so extremely tired that you couldn't find the strength. So you sit.

Here comes Jesus walking toward you. You invite him to come closer but are ready with the excuses and reasons for why you have been absent from him. He walks toward you and outstretches his hand. When he reaches you, his hand starts to move toward your head. Gently, ever so lovingly, he pushes your head to the chair back, and whispers, "Rest, Daughter, just rest."

*The LORD will give strength to His people;*

*The LORD will bless His people with peace (Psalm 29:11, NKJV).*

Have you encountered a moment with Jesus where you understood more fully that he gets you to your very core? He knows your heart. He knows when your soul needs rest. Let him stroke your hair and sing you a lullaby.

The background of the page is a repeating pattern of stylized pink roses. The roses are rendered in a light pink color with darker pink outlines, creating a delicate and romantic aesthetic. The pattern is consistent across the entire page, framing the central text.

SEPTEMBER 28

## *Found in a Desert*

Do you ever go through seasons in your life where you just feel dark? Perhaps directionless or uninspired? In a metaphorical wilderness where you can't get a glimpse of any vision or even hope, God can find you. Even in the deserts of your own heart where you can't muster the strength to reach out to him, he can and will meet you.

Wait for the Lord, even in your emptiness; wait for him and he will come for you.

*He found them in a desert, a windy, empty land. He surrounded them and brought them up, guarding them as those he loved very much (Deuteronomy 32:10, NCV).*

Thank you, Father, that you are near to me even when my heart is broken and my strength has failed. Thank you that you find me in my wilderness and you will restore me to joy.

SEPTEMBER 29

## *Making a Home*

Women love to create homes; just check out Pinterest. There are thousands of do-it-yourself home projects and décor ideas. Making a home is much more than cute furniture and pretty paint colors. We have the ability to create a dwelling place full of warmth and laughter. We can provide a place for our family to live where there is rest, security, and comfort.

It's good to reflect on what type of home we desire our children to grow up in. Don't we want a home where our children's spiritual foundation is strongly built?

*She speaks wise words  
and teaches others to be kind.*

*She watches over her family  
and never wastes her time.*

*Her children speak well of her (Proverbs 31:26-28, NCV).*

What type of home are you building for your children?

Aim to make it an escape from the busy world, a place where God's Word is heard and loved, and a place they can freely gather to share and pray for each other. Make it a home with God at the center.



SEPTEMBER 30

## What God Wants

Even before we acquire language, we can tell when we have done something good. Babies see our delighted reaction to their first smiles, giggles, and coos, and they smile, giggle, and coo some more. It makes them happy to bring us happiness. Seeing their joy brings us joy, so we heap even more laughter and smiles on them.

Praise and recognition are basic human desires given to us by God, and he desires the same. More than any great deed or accomplishment, he wants to hear our praise and receive our thanks. As a proud and loving Father, it brings him great joy to bring us joy.

*I have not kept the good news of your justice hidden in my heart;  
I have talked about your faithfulness and saving power.  
I have told everyone in the great assembly  
of your unfailing love and faithfulness (Psalm 40:10, NLT).*

How do your children react when you praise them? How do you respond when they recognize all you do for them? Magnify that happiness as far as you can, and you might get an inkling of how God feels when you praise his name and share what he has done for you.



# OCTOBER

Surely your goodness and unfailing love will  
pursue me all the days of my life,  
and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.

PSALM 23:6, NLT



OCTOBER 1

## *Filling the Emptiness*

We all experience seasons where we feel emptiness: an ache deep within us that is inexplicable but present all at once. In those times, when we aren't sure what it is that we're longing for, it is more of God that we need.

Deep in the heart of every person, there is an innate need for intimacy with our Creator. Without it our souls faint for want of him. But the beautiful truth is that he longs to fill us with himself. We have only to seek him in expectation.

*O God, you are my God;  
earnestly I seek you;  
my soul thirsts for you;  
my flesh faints for you,  
as in a dry and weary land  
where there is no water  
(Psalm 63:1, ESV).*

Lord, I long for your presence. I need you desperately. I pray that you would meet me in my emptiness and fill me with your Spirit.



OCTOBER 2

## *Priority of Presence*

Do you remember how slow time could pass when we were children? It was pure agony waiting for a special holiday or fun event to arrive. Now as adults, life tends to rush by. Days blend into weeks, and weeks into months. Trying to manage it all and stay present in each moment is not an easy task.

We become tired and worn down from the same routine every day. Discouragement and restlessness can overtake even the most devoted of mothers. However, defining our purpose and taking possession of our days makes every day meaningful. The dishes will always be there, as will the laundry, but those things don't really matter.

*“So don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will have its own worries. Each day has enough trouble of its own”  
(Matthew 6:34, NCV).*

Are you able to stay present in each moment? The deep and lasting impact of your presence does have significance in your child's life. Make being present a priority.

OCTOBER 3

## Take a Picture

We may all have been shocked by our children's ability to destroy our houses. Sometimes we find their messes cute—almost charming. We tell ourselves that the vase they broke wasn't really expensive, the stained carpet needed replacing anyway, or the lost earring wasn't very special. In those moments, it's easy to laugh off their antics.

But what about when they do destroy something special or irreplaceable? When we are first accosted with their destruction, it's important not to respond impulsively. If we can take two minutes and calm ourselves down, we will have a much more godly response. Our responses shape how our children view failure.

*Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding,  
but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly (Proverbs 14:29, NRSV).*

The next time you have to take two minutes before responding, grab your camera. Take a picture of your child sitting in the flour on the kitchen floor, pointing to their masterpiece on the wall, or leaning against the car with the dented door. It will lighten your heart and give you all a great memory to share in the years to come.

OCTOBER 4

## *You Make Him Happy*

What could be more rewarding than to know that you please the Lord? When you enter into a relationship with God, he promises to never leave you. He's with you for the long haul, not only because it's not in his nature to leave, but also because—simply put—you make him happy.

Often we convince ourselves that we have disappointed God. This translates into shame in our relationship with him. But God is pleased with us, and he longs to speak that over us. Spend time today delighting yourself in the Lord, and feeling his delight over you in return.

*O God, you are my God;  
earnestly I seek you;  
my soul thirsts for you;  
my flesh faints for you,  
as in a dry and weary land  
where there is no water (Psalm 63:1, ESV).*

What a beautiful thing to know that I bring you pleasure, God. Thank you for making me one of your people and for promising to never leave me.



OCTOBER 5

## *Iron and Iron*

Have you ever found a friend later in life that surprised you? A girlfriend, maybe, who you met at church one morning and bonded with instantly? After several more “coffee chats,” you and this friend feel more like sisters than friends. You can’t imagine how you ever got along in life without her. She is similar to you, which makes conversation easy, but your differences are also obvious. These girlfriends can be hard to find.

We often look to be friends with people who are similar to us. Friendships take work; they aren’t always natural. They require us to go deeper than we like, showing how vulnerable and real we can be with others. When you rub two blades together, the edges become sharper, making those blades more efficient. As friends, we are meant to share, to hold accountable, to encourage, to pray for, to sharpen each other.

*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another*  
(Proverbs 27:17, NIV).

Do you have someone in your life who helps sharpen you? Can you see that the sharpening process is beneficial to both of you? You need friends who are willing to ask the hard questions—and you can be that friend right back.

OCTOBER 6

## Seeking Praise

“Mommy, look what I did!” Kids love praise, and they learn early on who to get it from. “That’s the most beautiful flower drawing I’ve ever seen!” we gush.

We love to be recognized; it’s human nature. It feels good to be complimented for the countless hours we spent organizing the school fundraiser, caring for a sick friend’s child, or volunteering to help the poor. We feel seen and validated. There’s nothing wrong with this as long as our motive remains to give love freely. However, if we discover we are performing these seemingly selfless acts in order to gain the approval of others, it’s time to take a step back.

*“When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get” (Matthew 6:2, NLT).*

When you give your time, resources or attention to something, examine your heart. If you are reacting to pressure, hoping to impress someone, or outright seeking attention, go straight to God with your honest feelings. Ask him to fill you with a desire to please only him, so your children will have an example to model their own actions on.

OCTOBER 7

## Collected Tears

Our grief is near to God's heart. He longs to console us: to stroke our hair, wipe our tears, and whisper comfort. He counts the nights we toss and turn; he collects our tears. God isn't absent in our sorrow, rather the opposite—he is closer than ever.

Don't be afraid to come to God with your grief. Share with him the deepest feelings in your heart without holding back. In his presence you will find comfort, hope, compassion, and more love than you could imagine.

*You have seen me tossing and turning through the night. You have collected all my tears and preserved them in your bottle! You have recorded every one in your book (Psalm 56:8, TLB).*

Thank you, Jesus, for holding me in my sadness. I need your strength even more in my grief. Please be near to me and comfort me in your presence.



OCTOBER 8

## Vision Statement

Most successful businesses have a vision statement that outlines their purpose and goals. It not only helps motivate the workplace, it keeps the business focused on the end goal. Anything that doesn't align with that statement or prohibits the end goal is disregarded.

As busy moms, what is our vision statement for our families? It is good to have one. What fills our schedules and steals our time? We need to reclaim our families by saying no to unnecessary distractions that pull us away from our vision statement.

*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things (Colossians 3:1-2, NIV).*

What is your vision statement for your family? What things distract you from it?

OCTOBER 9

## Passing on Faith

Paul loved Timothy for many reasons, and chief among them was his devotion to Jesus. Timothy was a young man, but he had influences throughout his life, inspiring and helping to form his faith.

Even if we didn't grow up in a faith-filled household, we can start a legacy today, with our own children, by sharing the light inside us every chance we get.

*I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also (2 Timothy 1:5, NIV).*

Do your children see you living out your faith? What things, both big and small, could you do to help ensure the faith you have will live in your children?

OCTOBER 10

## *Committed to the Process*

While our salvation is a completed work, there is a continual working out of our faith. This is because God has called you into a relationship with himself. Relationships need to be nurtured and maintained. The word the Bible uses for this concept is renewal.

Even after salvation, our new self is still being renewed in knowledge in our Creator's image. Our minds also need continual renewal. Don't be discouraged if you are still struggling with old ways of thinking or acting. Renewal is a process. Continue to repent and submit yourself to God. He is more passionate about renewing you than you are. He's a loving God who is committed to the process.

*Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him (Colossians 3:10, NLT).*

God, I'm sorry for all the times I fall short. Help me to continually seek to renew my heart and my mind. Show me how to become more like you.



OCTOBER 11

## *Skip for Joy*

One of the best promises Jesus makes when we accept him as our Lord and Savior is a new start. A rebirth. A chance to wipe our dirty slate clean. This acceptance of our past, no matter what the circumstance, should be enough to make us want to skip down the sidewalk in joy. We've been given a second chance. We are made new in the name of Jesus Christ.

If we are holding on to something from twenty years ago, we are free to let it go. If the shame and hurt from that moment in our past has been stopping us from living in joy, we can be redeemed through Jesus. In his name, we are reborn and set free. The chains are broken. We can kick them off and start skipping!

*The LORD says, "Forget what happened before,  
and do not think about the past.  
Look at the new thing I am going to do.  
It is already happening. Don't you see it?  
I will make a road in the desert  
and rivers in the dry land" (Isaiah 43:18-19, NCV).*

Don't let something from years ago define the rest of your life. The enemy has taken enough from you. Instead, ask Jesus to make you new, and believe in the depths of your heart that he stands firm in his promise to you.

OCTOBER 12

## *Teach Them to Pray*

One of the most important conversations our children will ever have begins when they are little. It's the on-going dynamic conversation between them and their Maker, otherwise known as prayer. While it is personal, we can do things that help our children turn to God in prayer. We can model for our children our own prayer lives. When we are grateful, we can thank God in front of them. When we don't know what to do, we can ask him for help in their presence.

When our children are little, we might give them the opportunity to repeat after us as they are learning to pray. As they get older, we can switch to coaching them in their own prayers. It is ultimately a relationship we are aiming to foster, not a checklist they need to complete.

*My child, pay attention to what I say.*

*Listen carefully to my words.*

*Don't lose sight of them.*

*Let them penetrate deep into your heart,*

*for they bring life to those who find them,*

*and healing to their whole body (Proverbs 4:20–22, NLT).*

As your children realize the ease with which prayer comes, you won't have to do much more than listen. When they personally grasp his amazing love, they will be drawn back.

OCTOBER 13

## Greater Works

The clock ticks and time passes as you wonder if you've made the most of each second. You seek meaning in the mundane, and you begin to wonder if you'll ever taste the miracle in the moment. You believe that God is capable of the impossible, but would he really use you to accomplish it? Is he great enough and powerful enough to transcend your mediocrity and turn the work of your hands into something that will last for eternity?

No matter what you believe you are capable of, God knows your intended purpose. Give yourself completely to him and he will accomplish things you could never have imagined. God can do great things through a surrendered life. All you have to do is the surrender part. He will do the rest.

*“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12, NKJV).*

Heavenly Father, I surrender my life to you. I want to be someone you can use to do great works to the glory of your name. Have your way in my life.



OCTOBER 14

## Simple Encouragement

Kids leave. They grow up, stop being kids, and they leave. We hope we've told them everything they need to hear, and that they've really heard it. They'll be faced with many tests of their values and challenges to their faith. They will make choices entirely on their own; all we can do is pray and hope they make the right ones.

In his closing remarks to the Corinthians, Paul leaves them with these short, simple encouragements intended to help them hold onto their faith without his guidance.

*Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love (1 Corinthians 16:13-14, NIV).*

Where can you place these powerful verses so your child will see them? How can you make this part of your family culture? Consider each of Paul's admonishments. What does it mean to be on guard, stand firm, and be courageous and strong? What does it look like to do everything in love?

OCTOBER 15

## *Bad Days*

We all have bad days. And some are really bad. We give into selfish desires. We are unloving and impatient. We make terrible decisions and unwise choices. Bad days can make us feel so defeated.

Discouragement is not our friend, is it? Yet, it constantly tries to sneak into our hearts unwelcomed and unbidden. God sees beyond our bad days. Beyond our terrible choices and ugly moments. He sees directly into our hearts, and calls us worthy, despite the mess. He knows us and he loves us.

*“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (2 Corinthians 12:9, NKJV).*

Are you holding on to bad days? Cast away those days; name them insignificant, and take hold of the grace God gives you.

OCTOBER 16

## *Broken Fragments*

When a flower pot crashes to the pavement or a vase shatters to the floor, we consider the damage in hopes that it can be repaired. What is left? Dangerously tiny shards of glass, too small to piece back together? Or simple, bulky pieces, like those of a puzzle, needing only glue and patience? One thing is certain: we will work harder to fix something that has great value to us.

Just like the broken pottery, we are broken vessels in need of extensive repairs. No elaborate doctoring is required, however, just the humblest of procedures. We hold out our hands and give our broken, desperate, painful, sinful, prideful selves over to the one who mends us into wholeness without a single remaining scar or crack.

*He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control (Philippians 3:21, NLT).*

God, I marvel at your ability to piece even the tiniest fragments of my broken life back together. You are both holy and whole, and I am your creation. I submit to you, knowing that your healing work never leaves a scar and your abiding love makes me whole forever.



OCTOBER 17

## *A Reflection*

A good gauge of how we are living as followers of Christ is to look at the way our children—our greatest assignments—are behaving out in the world. This is not set in stone, and there are special cases where the most loving and competent parents are dealt a season (or more) with a challenging child. But if the parents of our children's friends routinely tell us we must be doing something right, then we must be.

Christ's light can shine in and out of us, and our children reflect that light wherever they go. Well done, moms!

*The only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves. Your lives are a letter written in our hearts; everyone can read it and recognize our good work among you (2 Corinthians 3:2, NLT).*

What do other adults think of your children? Spend some time with God in prayer and record what he reveals to you about the reflection you are casting through your children. Where are you shining? Where can you grow?

OCTOBER 18

## Simple Treasures

The tasks of mothers in and of themselves can be terribly dull. Not everyone can find huge excitement in reading the same story over and over again. We can only take so much mac-and-cheese and finger painting—especially when both end up on the floor and we find noodles stuck to our socks while scrubbing red paint out of the carpet.

Motherhood is a gift. It's not to be taken for granted and it certainly should never lose its luster. It's often in the simple moments that we find the most beauty: braiding our daughter's hair when she's just finished her bath, giggling over freshly baked cookies, making tents out of blankets. These are the moments we find our treasures in. Let's be careful not to call them mundane.

*Give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:20, NLT).*

Do you feel stuck in the everyday tasks of motherhood? Look around you and enjoy the simple treasures. God delights in watching you, and he loves when you take delight in watching your children.

OCTOBER 19

## Getting Back

Sometimes we lose our way and lose sight of the passion we once felt for God. Once we've lost our connection with him, we don't always know how to get back. We wonder if there is too much between us that he can't overlook.

But it's as simple as returning; as straightforward as getting down on your knees and saying, "God, I'm back." When you return, holding fast to the love that first drew you to him, God will show himself to you.

*As for you, return to your God,  
hold fast to love and justice,  
and wait continually for your God (Hosea 12:6, NRSV).*

God, I know that there are areas of my life where I've put distance between myself and you. I don't want to continue with a disconnect between us. I want to return to you and be restored to right relationship. Thank you that even when I wandered, you never went anywhere.



OCTOBER 20

## *Light at the End of the Tunnel*

It is such a gift to be able to look back on life and know that it was all part of a plan. No matter the circumstance, it turned out for the best. We can see God's hand in the ups and downs, in the confusion and hurt, in the joy and the pain. While we were in it, it might have seemed unmanageable. It may have been so trying that we couldn't see how we would ever come out on the other end intact. But we did. He brought us there. Learning from that experience is valuable.

We are bound to have more of those moments that seem unconquerable. In those times, we can picture Jesus walking toward us, arms outstretched, pulling us into his embrace. Most often, in those difficult moments, all we want is his comfort, reminding us that it is going to be okay.

*You are my hiding place;  
you protect me from trouble.*

*You surround me with songs of victory (Psalm 32:7, NLT).*

What has Jesus brought you through that you can clearly see now? Maybe you are experiencing one of those moments right now. Take heart. God promises to be there in the midst of the chaos. He will bring you through to the other side stronger than you were before.

OCTOBER 21

## *I Believe I Am Accepted*

How can it be that a humble prayer, a simple and yet astounding desire to lay down one's life and take up a life like Jesus Christ, establishes our eternity in the kingdom of heaven? We live in a world where, more often than not, we get what we deserve and nothing comes easy.

Sometimes, because we can't believe that acceptance can come from such a simple act, we reconstruct the gospel. We want to feel like we deserve God's grace, or that we have earned it, or that we've traded fairly. We build another set of requirements: more praying, more giving, more reading, more serving. Quiet time. Worship team. Children's ministry. Bible study. All of these habits are good and Christ-like, but they don't guarantee more acceptance. Not from God, anyway.

*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved (Romans 10:9-10, ESV).*

God, thank you that the path to salvation really is simple. I don't have to earn it. I believe it. I confess it. My simple and earnest prayer assures me of acceptance into your family.

OCTOBER 22

## *In Need of a Shepherd*

There is a reason Jesus calls us sheep and himself a shepherd. Jesus' original audience was familiar with shepherding. They knew that sheep are some of the least intelligent animals out there. They are weak, prone to wander, and helpless in times of danger. Every sheep needs a shepherd to lead, correct, protect, and provide for them. Jesus wasn't being condescending when he called us sheep; he was letting us know that he wants to take care of us.

Any mother that's honest with herself is keenly aware of her own weaknesses. She doesn't have all the answers. A mother is considered vulnerable because in times of danger, by instinct, she won't protect herself—she will take care of her children. Because of this, she needs a protector. She also needs someone stronger than she is to lean on when she doesn't have all the answers.

*“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...and I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14-15, NIV).*

Are you keenly aware of your weaknesses? Jesus wants to be your shepherd. You do not have to do everything on your own.



OCTOBER 23

## *The Greatest Commandment*

In your home, you probably have a long list of rules. There are rules about respect, safety, and morality. What if there was one rule—just one—that made all the others easier to follow?

In Deuteronomy, before Moses gets into the particulars of a very long, specific list of rules from God, he sums it up neatly and simply with this idea: God is God, and he wants us to love him with all that we are. We need to pass this thought along to our children.

*“Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the LORD alone. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up” (Deuteronomy 6:4-7, NLT).*

What would your life look like if every decision you made started with the question, “Will this show my love for God?” How would it affect your parenting if you taught your children to make their choices this same way?

OCTOBER 24

## Perseverance

Do you remember when you first decided to follow Christ? Maybe you felt like a huge weight was being lifted off you, or that the peace and joy you'd been searching for was finally yours. You were filled with excitement in your newfound life, and you felt ready to take on the world in the name of Jesus.

Following God may come easy at first. We accept him into our lives and are swept into his love with incredible hope. But as time goes on, old temptations return, and threaten to shake our resolve. The confidence we felt in our relationship at first lessens as we wonder if we have what it takes to stick it out in this Christian life. Remain confident in him; he will accomplish what he has promised. When following him gets hard, press in even harder and remember that you will be richly rewarded for your perseverance.

*Do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised (Hebrews 10:35-36, NLT).*

God, help me remain in a place of total confidence and trust in you. I want to step boldly into all that you have for me.



OCTOBER 25

## *Fragile Yet Successful*

If things are working, especially if you find yourself shaking your head and wondering how they are working, you are right where God wants you to be. How did you pull off that school project your child forgot to mention until bedtime the night before it was due? How did the checkbook numbers suddenly fall into place, when only yesterday you had no idea how you'd pay the bills this month?

If we want to be certain God is at work in us, we should consider the rather astonishing fact that we are still standing, still thriving, still rising to another day's challenges when we know without a doubt we can't be doing it all on our own.

*We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves (2 Corinthians 4:7, NLT).*

Do you occasionally (or even often) find yourself successful despite your own blunders and shortcomings? Praise God for using you, a fragile, possibly cracked pot, to do his great work.



OCTOBER 26

## *Drawn In*

Can you sense God's presence in your home? Does his glory dwell among perfectly dusted and arranged shelves, or among undone dishes and piles of laundry? You don't need stacks of Christian books or Bible verses stenciled on your walls; you don't even need clean walls (or floors, or countertops) to invite God into your home and to feel his loving presence all around you.

God is love. No matter what our homes look like; if they're full of love, he'll be drawn there. And so will others.

*LORD, I love the house where you live,  
the place where your glory dwells (Psalm 26:8, NIV).*

Do you want to have "the house"? The one all your kids' friends come to? Ask God to fill it with love, and watch them come.

OCTOBER 27

## Selflessness

When we choose to live for other people, our lives immediately take on greater value. We are no longer living for our own benefit but for the benefit of many. It can be more rewarding to serve others without concern for what we might receive in return, than to live only looking out for ourselves. That is not the way we were created. We were created to love selflessly. Selfless love is shown through directing our time, money, and effort toward others.

No amount of personal wealth or gain can amount to the reward we get when we serve others, putting them before ourselves. And what a valuable lesson we are teaching our children. When we serve without grumbling or complaining, we are teaching them selflessness. In today's society, that is a rare skill.

*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms (1 Peter 4:10, NIV).*

What tangible things can you do to teach your kids selfless love? Remember that often your children are watching you for an example on how to live. You can teach without saying a word.

OCTOBER 28

## *Beneficial Correction*

*To learn, you must love discipline;  
it is stupid to hate correction (Proverbs 12:1, NLT).*

Just for fun, try this one out on your kids the next time they complain about a deserved consequence. First of all, they'll have to get past the fact the Bible is basically calling them "the s-word," which you have probably banned. But after that, the door will be open to a great conversation. Have them imagine living with a dog that had never been taught not to chew shoes or to go outside to do its business. You can't grow without failing, and you can't change without correction.

*No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way (Hebrews 12:11, NLT).*

It can be hard to convince a child you are disciplining them because you love them. At the time, all they know is that something they want—whether an action figure, cell phone, or car keys—has been taken away, and they are not happy. How do you show your children love when you discipline them? How does God show you love when he is correcting a fault in you?



OCTOBER 29

## Letting Go

As Christian parents, we know and believe that even though our children are ours to hold, nurture, and love, they really are the Lord's. There is comfort in knowing that they belong to the one who will go to the ends of the earth to protect and keep them from harm. Even still, letting them grow and letting them go is a very difficult part of parenthood.

Raising children in a “me-centered” culture is challenging. Letting them out of our protective reach to go into that culture is insanely difficult. But, eventually, it must be done. We can only trust that we have given them tools to be prepared. The best tools are Jesus Christ and his Word. With God, our children have the ability to overcome any temptation that the world hands them.

*Let each generation tell its children of your mighty acts;  
let them proclaim your power (Psalm 145:4, NLT).*

Do you find it difficult to release your children into the world? How does knowing that God has already overcome every kind of evil make releasing your grasp a little easier? When you send your children to school, to be with their friends, or to pursue their dreams, it's really the Lord you entrust them to.

OCTOBER 30

## *Influence to Advocate*

From the day we are cognizant, we begin taking on influences. As parents, we have the huge responsibility of being the primary influence in our children's lives—until they make their first friend, step into daycare, or even observe others from inside the shopping cart. And then our responsibility shifts; we take on the role of advocate, getting to know as much as we can about the adults and children our young ones interact with, especially those they admire.

Setting our children up for success by giving them as many godly influences as we can is one of the best ways we can love them. Letting them be led by people whose values are not in line with our own is a recipe for disaster, especially as they get older.

*“Every plant not planted by my heavenly Father will be uprooted, so ignore them. They are blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into a ditch”*  
(Matthew 15:13-14, NLT).

What steps have you taken to monitor the influences in your children's lives? Ask God to lead them toward people who love him, and to grant them discernment to avoid those who would lead them down the wrong path.



OCTOBER 31

## *The Copycat*

Our children watch everything we do. It is always fun when the one-year-old starts walking around with her hand up to her ear like she's on the phone, or nodding his head and laughing out loud like he's seen his mother do, or sitting by an older child trying to put on her shoes too. At one, imitation is essential. The actions copied during this stage of life have significance. Isn't it amazing that God created us this way?

In Ephesians, we are called to be imitators of God. That's a very lofty goal. But Ephesians goes on to say we are God's children. To imitate God, we have to understand that he does everything in love. He deals with us in compassion, grace, and forgiveness. We, in turn, are to treat others the same way.

*Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God (Ephesians 4:32-5:2, NLT).*

What does imitating God mean to you? If a one-year-old understands that his or her actions have significance, you have the ability to grasp that and ask God to help you as well.





# NOVEMBER

My God shall supply all your need according to  
His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:19, NKJV

NOVEMBER 1

## *Application Accepted*

Applications are essential for gleanings the promising applicants from the inadequate. Fill out this form, and find out if you're approved for a home loan, for college admittance, for a credit card. We put our best qualities on paper, tweak our weaknesses, and hope for approval. But rejection is always a possibility.

With God, however, our acceptance has already been promised. We must only appeal to his Son, Jesus, who steps in on our behalf and petitions for our approval. There is no credit flaw, no failing grade, and no past default that his death on the cross doesn't redeem completely. Because we are covered with his loving forgiveness, there is no flaw in us. We are accepted by God as part of his family and redeemed by his grace for his eternal kingdom.

*Long ago, even before he made the world, God chose us to be his very own through what Christ would do for us; he decided then to make us holy in his eyes, without a single fault—we who stand before him covered with his love (Ephesians 1:4, TLB).*

God, I stand on the promise that there is nothing in my history—no past or present sin—that can separate me from your love. I cast everything on you and believe I am wholly accepted and abundantly loved!



NOVEMBER 2

## Worthy of Love

You probably didn't change the world today. You probably didn't climb a mountain, make a ground-breaking film, raise a million dollars for cancer research, or author a software application that will make millions of lives easier. Maybe you didn't even make dinner. Or the bed. So was your day worthless? Not to anyone you interacted with in love—no matter how small the gesture or how short the conversation. You are important! You are valuable, you are loved, and you are irreplaceable. Believe it.

*“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows” (Luke 12:6-7, NIV).*

Are there days you find it hard to believe God could love you fiercely, deeply, and desperately—the way you love your own children? Why do you think that is the case? Ask him to help you believe, and to help you let down your defenses and feel his immense love.



NOVEMBER 3

## Get Rich Quick

Advertisements for losing twenty pounds in ten days, getting rich in thirty days, or changing your financial future in three easy steps are all over the place. Marketing companies dangle the schemes and we buy them because they appeal to our desire for a quick-and-easy fix.

Knowing and loving God is not a magic pill that takes away all of our problems. God is not a get-rich-quick scam we buy into. But we will become rich in other ways. Knowing him will fill us with joy and hope. He will give us faith to walk through the darkest of struggles and a heart that is compassionate and loving. He will teach us how to give and serve.

*“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21, NASB).*

God’s definition of wealth differs greatly from the world’s. Do you feel wealthy as a child of God? Spiritual wealth is of much greater importance than physical wealth. Store up those treasures that can’t be taken away—like the joy, peace, and love found in Christ!

NOVEMBER 4

## *Deeper Roots*

Calla lilies are beautiful flowers with wide, spotted leaves, thick stems, and bold colors. Year after year, you can watch the stunning leaves appear, and anticipate the gorgeous flowers...and then be disappointed when nothing more happens. Perhaps the soil is the problem? Calla lilies can be very particular.

It's a great picture of Jesus' parable of the sower and the seeds. Some seeds fall on rocky soil, and while God's Word is received, it doesn't take firm root and quickly withers at the sign of hardship. The seeds that are established in good soil, where the roots can go deep, not only survive, they also bear fruit.

*"The one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty" (Matthew 13:23, NASB).*

God, I long to see more depth in my relationship with you. I want others to see your beauty displayed in my life. Help me to plant myself in fertile soil so I can hear, understand, and bear fruit for your glory.

NOVEMBER 5

## Anger

Those who are closest to us get to see us at our ugliest moments. Unfortunately, children are often the recipients of our anger. This is not something to berate ourselves for. It is something to bring to the light of his presence. When our anger is brought to the light, our healing will more quickly appear.

It's important to remember that God is also a parent. As a parent, we know that he is slow to anger and rich in love. When we hear that, we aren't to hate ourselves for our anger. We are to fall down in humility. He will show us his forgiveness and his richness of love.

*“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6, NRSV).*

Have you ever been surprised by your own anger? Don't let this Scripture make you feel worse. It should give you the grace you need to be more gracious to your children. Once you taste again how good God is to you, it will be easier to show your children the same kind of goodness and love.



NOVEMBER 6

## Significance

You are significant. You are significant if you are single or married. You are significant if you have a high-paying job or are unemployed. You are significant if you stay home with your kids or go to work. You are significant if you are an orphan or if you come from a big family. You are significant if you are an extrovert, introvert, or somewhere in between. You are significant because God knit you together in your mother's womb. You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

We are all significant and we matter to God. We can't let anyone tell us differently. God's Word for our lives is the truth that should be impressed on our hearts so it can never leave us.

*For you formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well (Psalm 139:13-14, ESV).*

Do you feel significant? Believe the truth of what God says: he set you apart and you are wonderfully made!

NOVEMBER 7

## *Better than Rubies*

If you were granted the one thing that you desire most, what would it be? We can probably answer this question better if we think of who or what we idolize. Whose life do we want, or what quality do we most admire? Beauty, intelligence, creativity, recognition, or love?

King Solomon understood the value of wisdom better than any other. When God offered him anything he desired, King Solomon responded with a request for wisdom. He could have asked for fame, or riches, or success in warfare; instead, he asked for understanding. King Solomon sought knowledge and instruction first, and ended up being the most wise, wealthy, famous, successful king that ever lived.

*Receive my instruction, and not silver,  
And knowledge rather than choice gold;  
For wisdom is better than rubies,  
And all the things one may desire  
cannot be compared with her (Proverbs 8:10-11, NKJV).*

God, I recognize the value of wisdom today. Give me deeper understanding of your Word and the world around me. Help me to seek after your wisdom as I would seek for gold, silver, and jewels.

NOVEMBER 8

## *Loved in Failure*

Peter's first letter is all about how to live as a follower of Christ. Resist temptation in places that are filled with it. Do good and expect to suffer for it. Love your enemy but don't expect any love in return. Sounds fun, doesn't it? Mostly, it sounds impossible. Consider your life as a mother: never give in to cupcakes, clean and organize your child's room, and be yelled at for moving their favorite shirt.

The occasional failure is inevitable, so what do we do? We open our hearts even more to Christ, and we love. We love as much and as well as we possibly can. We love the driver who cuts us off in traffic. We love the angry teenager that used to be our precious, happy child. Peter assures us if we get that one right, the rest of it won't matter so much.

*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8, NIV).*

How often do you tell your children you love them? What things, big or small, do you do each day to remind them how much they are loved? Ask the Father to imbed that love deep into their hearts.



NOVEMBER 9

## Legacy of Life

We are the authors of our own legacy. Each day we are given the opportunity to create our own stories: stories that will be retold in great detail to future generations. A million moments and choices have the ability to impact so many lives. We make choices that create history and determine the future.

Is God woven throughout our stories? We should be diligent in the choices that we make, choosing kindness, love, and patience. Let's make these things our legacy. Let them be what people will remember us by.

*“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart”*  
(Deuteronomy 6:5-6, NASB).

What story are you writing today? Let it be a story of love, forgiveness, and redemption. Let it be one that tells the good news of a life in Jesus Christ.

NOVEMBER 10

## *A Light Burden*

Are you burdened with commitments, responsibilities, and worries? What does God have on your plate that you are facing? In Matthew 11:30, Jesus said his burden is light. What a precious gift he gives us in that statement! When considering our burdens, a good litmus test we can ask ourselves is, “Do the burdens that are before me feel light or heavy?”

We will have burdens and responsibilities in life. We cannot escape that. But sometimes we are burdened with things Jesus never intended for us to carry. How can we know which ones are from him? We ask, “Is this burden heavy or light?” We know clearly from Scripture that Jesus’ burdens are the light ones. If he has placed it on us, we won’t be consumed with its weight.

*“My burden is light” (Matthew 11:30, NIV).*

How does your burden feel today? If you realize it is heavy, cast it on Jesus. Let him take care of it. He never intended for you to carry it on your own.

NOVEMBER 11

## *The Black Hole*

Discouragement is one of the ugliest, most impactful feelings the enemy tries to devour us with. Once we feel discouraged, there can be a snowball effect. Discouragement piles on until we are sucked into a vicious, black hole of lies. The lies tell us this life is all we live for; lies say we aren't enough and never will be; lies make us believe that we'll never get out of the corner we feel backed into.

Listing logical, spiritual truths can quiet our minds. When we start reciting truth, the lies will soon be silenced. If we humble ourselves before the Lord, we are honest about our limitations and we invite him in to take over.

*The humble will see their God at work and be glad.*

*Let all who seek God's help be encouraged (Psalm 69:32, NLT).*

What are some of the ways the enemy tries to flood your mind with discouragement? Grab a pen, a journal, and your Bible, and sit in the presence of the Lord. Start writing out what you know to be true about who God created you to be and the roles he's given you in this world.



NOVEMBER 12

## True Peace

What is peace? A moment of true relaxation?

An hour of quiet calm? Ease of life and circumstance? Our definitions of peace may make us feel peaceful, but do they line up with the true definition given by the peace giver himself?

Jesus says very plainly that his peace isn't the same as the world's peace. He does not give it in the same way that the world gives—a way that comes and goes and can be claimed or lost at any instant. His peace is not dependent on mood or circumstance, position or company. His peace is inward. It's a lack of fear. It's the absence of anxiety. It's the knowledge that no matter what loudness, what weariness, what complications surround you—you are held.

*"I leave you peace; my peace I give you. I do not give it to you as the world does. So don't let your hearts be troubled or afraid"*  
(John 14:27, NCV).

Lord Jesus, I worry and fear about so many things. I unknowingly exchange your peace for the world's peace that is fleeting and unsure. But I crave your true peace, the peace that will not come and go with each passing circumstance.

NOVEMBER 13

## *Acting in the Spirit*

It is impossible to maintain a healthy balance in a life of distractions, commitment overload, and false expectations. Inevitably, we fall apart. When we do, as moms, it is usually in the comfort of our own homes with the people we are most accustomed to—our family. We would never dream of falling apart in the outside world.

Falling apart most often looks like losing it: yelling, sighing, throwing things. Whatever your falling apart resembles, it isn't biblical. The harm we can do to those around us when we lose it can be great. We hinder their understanding of grace and God's goodness. He asks us to act in the Spirit, not in the flesh.

*Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want (Galatians 5:16-17, NIV).*

Are you in the habit of losing it in the comfort of your own home? Rely on God's Spirit to help you maintain control. He will give you the strength you need. You just have to ask.

NOVEMBER 14

## Overwhelming Advice

There are so many voices giving counsel to mothers. Just walk through your local bookstore: the parenting section is huge. Parenting magazines are in every doctor's office, and experts line up on many TV shows. It seems there are scores of people eager to give us wisdom on how to raise our children. What's worse is that many of them say conflicting things. It can be overwhelming.

It is of utmost importance that we exercise discernment in choosing what advice we take but also what advice we listen to. Our number one question in evaluating the advice should be, "Is this Godly wisdom? Is it consistent with the teaching of Scripture?" God promises to give us wisdom if we ask. We should ask him before we ask others, and wait for his direction.

*Do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight,  
preserve sound judgment and discretion; they will be life for you  
(Proverbs 3:21–22, NIV).*

Are you overwhelmed with advice? Take a deep breath. God has called you and anointed you specifically to parent your child. Read his Word and compare the advice you've been given with that. If it doesn't match up—forget it.



NOVEMBER 15

## *Because of the Poor*

God's economy is completely opposite from our own. Our currency is money and power, while his are mercy and grace. Our society elevates the rich and prominent, God lifts up the needy and nameless. His main objective isn't getting something from people; it's lavishing himself on them. His heart lies with the poor. He is a defender of the helpless and a protector of the weak.

If we desire to please the heart of the Father, then we too will take up the cause of the poor. We will defend them, rescue them, and help them. We will speak for them, honor them, and lavish love on them.

*The LORD says, "I will now rise up, because the poor are being hurt. Because of the moans of the helpless, I will give them the help they want" (Psalm 12:5, NCV).*

Father, I know that your heart is tender toward the needy. Put opportunities in my path to meet the needs of the poor and to serve the helpless.

NOVEMBER 16

## Choosing Battles

Conflict affects relationships. In the parent-child dynamic, most discord is ultimately resolved, and often connections become stronger. However, as our children get older our “battles” must be chosen more carefully.

Yes, we are the parents and yes, they must respect us, but we also must consider the overall situation. How important is our position? Is their safety or reputation at stake? If so, we stand our ground. If not, we take pause and consider the cost: if we lose, what do we lose? If we win, at what price? Is being right worth severing a thread in our connection? Sometimes, peace or even compromise may be the wiser route.

*“Suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace” (Luke 14:31-32, NIV).*

How carefully do you choose your battles, both in parenting and in the rest of your life? What are your kids learning about conflict from you? Pray God will help you be a mother who takes Jesus’ advice— and teaches her children to do the same.

NOVEMBER 17

## Abiding

There are many things God doesn't ask of us as mothers. He doesn't ask us to be perfect. It's impossible anyway. He doesn't ask us to be sinless. This is impossible as well. He simply asks us to abide in him in the presence of our children. As we abide in him, many things will rub off on our children.

Abiding in him means not leaving the faith. It means modeling steadfastness for our children when circumstances are shaking. It means repenting to him when we sin. We give our children a gift when we model how to be restored to the Father after we sin. It shows them how to respond when they sin.

*“Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me” (John 15:4, NRSV).*

Many things will change in the course of your children's lives while they are living in your home. When you continue to walk in God's love and forgiveness, it will make a deep impression on their minds, hearts, and spirits as they grow in him.



NOVEMBER 18

## *A Household of Faith*

These days most homes center around work, school, and extra-curricular activities. The joke that most moms live in their minivans is not far from the truth. Meals are eaten from here to there as we rush from one activity to the next. Little time is given to relationship-building or conversation.

We can easily lose ourselves in day-to-day tasks, so it is important to consider what rules our lives and make adjustments when needed. Having a joy-filled, God-centered life takes effort and planning. There are so many things we can do: family game nights, special meals together, community projects, walks in the park, spring cleaning, and garage sales—to name a few!

*“If you refuse to serve the LORD, then choose today whom you will serve.... But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD”  
(Joshua 24:15, NLT).*

What rules your days? Is God at the center of your family? If not, find ways you can make him a priority in your house. Don't let activities rule your life.

NOVEMBER 19

## Teaching Forgiveness

One of the most important things we can teach our children is forgiveness. Whether they need to ask for our forgiveness, or ask it of a sibling, friend, or stranger, it is a biblical virtue that God asks us to practice and teach. Undoubtedly, there have been moments where we have overreacted, or raised our voices a little too loudly, or not shown our children compassion in a moment of weakness—these are opportune times to teach forgiveness.

Asking our children to forgive us isn't easy because it means we have to admit that we were wrong and put ourselves in a position of humility. When we sin, we repent to God and ask for his forgiveness; then we should go straight to our children and ask for theirs. The admittance of error and request for forgiveness will teach them more than all our failures and mistakes.

*If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness (1 John 1:9, NLT).*

Do you need to repent of something? Get down on your knees before God and before your children. Look them in the eye, and tell them you were wrong. Ask them to forgive you. Teach them what repentance looks like.

NOVEMBER 20

## Leveling Up

As we learn to walk in surrender to the Holy Spirit, our heavenly Father beckons us to a higher level of intimacy with him. In order to do this, we must become vulnerable and get real with him. We must continually trust him more than our experiences or reasoning.

When we trust God without boundaries, we find him more reliable than anyone else. We are wrapped in his love—the safest place we could find ourselves. Constantly leaning our hearts toward him, and choosing what he would, we receive his comfort and guidance, and our paths become straight.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths (Proverbs 3:5-6, ESV).*

Heavenly Father, I come to you and ask you to help me trust you, knowing that you have the best in store for me. Have your way with me. I release control, and I trust in you. You are for me, not against me. I love you.



NOVEMBER 21

## *Clean on the Surface*

Is your child's room a mess? If it's pretty clean, check the closet and under the bed. Chances are you'll find a pile or two. Or worse. It takes a great deal of patience and perseverance to teach a child to really deal with their messes instead of merely moving them out of sight.

How about us? This can be literal, in the form of a messy closet or junk room, or it can be more figurative. Do we present a together, happy, organized face to the world while our hearts overflow with clutter, pressure, and disarray?

*“You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean” (Matthew 23:25, 27, NIV).*

Spend some time with God today letting him clean the inside of your cup. Bare your biggest messes before him, and let him wash you.

NOVEMBER 22

## Heart Posture

Heart posture. It's a phrase heard among believer friends. What was the posture of your heart in that moment? Heart posture takes maturity to understand. For many of us, the act of doing something is usually enough: putting your hands in the air when a convicting song is sung at church, asking for forgiveness because you overreacted, or volunteering at a local charity. But if we were to ask God to show us our hearts in those moments, what would we see?

Would our hearts show we were truly praising Jesus for his ultimate sacrifice? That we were actually remorseful when we asked for forgiveness? That we were serving because we want to love others as ourselves? Our heart posture is what matters in serving God. It shows the true nature of our response.

*“I will give you a new heart—I will give you new and right desires—and put a new spirit within you. I will take out your stony hearts of sin and give you new hearts of love” (Ezekiel 36:26, TLB).*

Meditate on your heart posture as situations arise today. Can you honestly evaluate your motivation in those moments? Be encouraged that God gives you his Spirit to help you keep your motivations pure.

NOVEMBER 23

## Thankfulness

Cultivating a thankful heart is learning to recognize his perfect gifts: his presence, his grace, his mercy, his love, his healing, his salvation. These are just some of his gifts. They can only come from the Father. They are perfectly designed by him for us. We may long for earth-like gifts, but those gifts eventually lose their luster. They are corruptible.

Gifts from God have eternal value.

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning (James 1:17, NKJV).*

God knows what you really need, and he gives abundantly. Write out the gifts God has blessed you with and be thankful.



NOVEMBER 24

## Truly Listening

There's usually a space on a child's report card for "Pays attention in class." We are pleased with positive remarks, glad to know we have a child who listens to those trying to teach them. If we find we have a poor listener, we grow concerned. How, after all, are they going to learn if they don't listen?

Indeed, we would do well to ask this same question of ourselves. Are we hearing God's words without listening? Do we skim over our "daily verse" only to forget it within moments and miss what God might have been trying to teach us that day?

*"To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them"*  
(Mark 4:25, NLT).

Reflect upon recent struggles or recurring themes in your life. Is God trying to teach you something right now? Spend several minutes listening for God's voice, and write down anything he brings to mind.

NOVEMBER 25

## Counting Blessings

*I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord;  
apart from you I have no good thing” (Psalm 16:2, NIV).*

Every good thing comes from God. We’ve heard this, and we know this, but how often do we really ponder it? Take some time and consider every positive aspect of your life. Think of your children, home, extended family, friends, vocation, hobbies, and more. Think of every great decision you ever made, every hunch you followed to success. Every good thing. Now consider God, your Father; he has given you all of it. That’s how much he loves you.

*You make known to me the path of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence,  
with eternal pleasures at your right hand (Psalm 16:11, NIV).*

When was the last time you listed out your blessings? How has the list grown or changed since then? Count your blessings today and let God fill you with joy and gratitude.

NOVEMBER 26

## *Strength of His Presence*

Our lives demand strength. There are many situations that we find ourselves in that test what we're made of. We do our best to be strong and to meet each challenge head on, but we consistently come up short. What we often fail to recognize is that it's only in our weakness that the perfect strength of God can be shown.

We have a God who fights for us. A God who bends down his ear to our cry and who lends his strength for the battle. When we seek to dwell in the place of his presence daily, we will find his strength in our hearts and his power in our spirits.

*Seek the LORD and his strength;  
seek his presence continually! (1 Chronicles 16:11, ESV)*

Lord, I am weak. There are things in my life that have beaten me down and have only served to amplify my need for you. I am here today asking for your strength and for your presence. I need you in every part of my life.



NOVEMBER 27

## Sibling Rivalry

If you grew up with siblings, you know that siblings have a mutual understanding: fight hard and forgive fiercely. Be honest to a fault, but make sure everyone is okay in the end. Above all else... love. We love each other despite our differences and appreciate how God created us. We embrace the similarities that make us siblings, yet we're sure to point out the nuances that make us unique.

Siblings are a beautiful thing. Big brothers adore and protect, older sisters guide and care, younger brothers are playful and fun, baby sisters are adventurous and sweet. God has a plan for every family, and siblings are a precious gift.

*Hatred stirs up conflict,  
but love covers over all wrongs (Proverbs 10:12, NIV).*

What was your family like growing up? Is the family you have now what you envisioned, or did God have different plans for your life? God has designed your family to fit perfectly together in its own unique puzzle. Embrace what you have been blessed with today.

NOVEMBER 28

## Weight of Worry

Worry fills our head with questions that may never have answers and possibilities that may never come to pass. We become wearied as even our momentary troubles outweigh our peace. It is in these times that the encouraging words of a friend can become the catalyst to change our uncertainty into strength and our doubt into restored faith.

By surrounding ourselves with the type of people who regularly speak the truth, we unknowingly secure our own peace and future gladness.

*Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down,  
but a good word makes him glad (Proverbs 12:25, ESV).*

God, when I begin to feel anxious, I pray that you would bring a friend to speak your truth to me. Help me also to be an encouraging friend who brings peace to those around me.

NOVEMBER 29

## *Human Empathy*

There are few things more remarkable than the power of human empathy. When someone is hurt, we can feel their pain although we are not wounded. When someone cries, we can weep with them although we are not sad. When someone laughs, we can enjoy the moment with them although the happiness is not our own.

Jesus came to us, as a human, in the greatest act of empathy in history. As we follow his example by shouldering each other's sorrows and by sharing in another's joy, we express his heart to the world.

*Rejoice with those who rejoice,  
weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15, ESV).*

Lord, give me a capacity for empathy that will minister your character to those around me. Help me to better understand what others are going through so that I can reveal your heart to those around me.



NOVEMBER 30

## Remember Your Wonders

When we find ourselves doubting God's power to work miracles in our lives, we must remember the wonders he has performed throughout history. Scripture is full of accounts of lives changed by the power of God.

The same great God who raised Lazarus from the dead is the God we worship today. The God who gave sight to a blind man and who let a lame man get up and walk still works miracles. Believe God for something great, knowing that his power has never lessened and his wonders never cease.

*I will remember the deeds of the LORD;  
yes, I will remember your wonders of old  
(Psalm 77:11, ESV).*

God, I am amazed at the wonders you have performed throughout history. Help me to recall your power when I begin to doubt your strength. Thank you for redeeming me and allowing me, through faith, to witness your miracles in my own life. Help me to grow in faith and expectation of your greatness.



# DECEMBER

Faith is the confidence that what we hope for  
will actually happen; it gives us assurance about  
things we cannot see.

HEBREWS 11:1, NLT

DECEMBER 1

## God's Daughter

We are mothers, but we are also daughters. Every day, no matter what you face, remember whose you are. He called you by name; he specially chose you. Remember how much he loves you.

*“When you go through deep waters,*

*I will be with you.*

*When you go through rivers of difficulty,*

*you will not drown.*

*When you walk through the fire of oppression,*

*you will not be burned up;*

*the flames will not consume you.*

*For I am the Lord, your God,*

*the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*

*I gave Egypt as a ransom for your freedom;*

*I gave Ethiopia and Seba in your place.*

*Others were given in exchange for you.*

*I traded their lives for yours*

*because you are precious to me.*

*You are honored, and I love you” (Isaiah 43:2-4, NLT).*

Read these verses from Isaiah out loud; make them yours, and then share your doubts and your gratitude with your Father.



DECEMBER 2

## *Band-Aids*

The price of disposable band-aids varies slightly from company to company. A standard band-aid—one void of any superhero or princess—currently costs about seven cents. However, if we want a kid-oriented band-aid, the price increases considerably. Those range in price from twenty-three cents all the way up to a dollar each. For a disposable piece of plastic that might last half a day (if you're lucky), it seems like a hefty price to pay. Or does it?

When children ask for a band-aid, most of the time that isn't really what they are asking for. If we can listen beyond the tears, the whine, and the urgency, what we will hear is a much deeper question: "Will you stop your day to listen to me—to love me?" Giving our children a band-aid, no matter the cost, shows them that we care. It validates their concern.

*Children are a gift from God; they are his reward (Psalm 127:3, TLB).*

Sometimes the little things mean more than the big in the life of a child. Sometimes it's worth "wasting" seven cents, on a wound that you know isn't bleeding, to demonstrate you care. It's not a large investment, but it is guaranteed to pay off in the long run.

DECEMBER 3

## *A Wise Investment*

Moms of young children often seem to be physically exhausted. Their labor is physical because there are very few things young children can do on their own. When mothers make their children's needs a priority, they are likely putting some of their ambitions and goals on hold. Some days this might not bother them at all. But perhaps there are days when they are filled with a sinking question: "Am I giving my time to the right thing?"

Dear mothers, we have chosen a worthy role. Raising children is a task that is to be esteemed highly. We are giving up on other things, but we should also consider all that we are gaining and investing in. The older we get, the more we seem to value this opportunity. It's like we can see that it was the wisest investment we could have made.

*They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life (1 Timothy 6:18-19, NLT).*

Be encouraged, God values your role as a mother. Let him guide you and inspire you as you invest in your children.

DECEMBER 4

## *Burdened Mother*

It is normal for mothers to carry the burden of intercession for their children. They see things that others don't, and they often have longings for their children that the Lord has placed in their hearts.

Ultimately, it's God's work. They are his children. We have an invitation to agree with his desires and partner with him in the work that he is doing in our children. That partnering might look different through different stages of life. He might call us to fast regularly for their healing, pray with other mothers, or keep a journal of his promises over our children. Either way, we need to know that it is God's job to care for our children, and ours to have faith as we seek him.

*Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him (Hebrews 11:6, ESV).*

Are you desperate to see a breakthrough in your child? Casting the burden on the Lord is not giving up. It is an act of faith that proclaims, "This child is in the Lord's hands." And faith always pleases God.



DECEMBER 5

## *Exercising Self-control*

“Control yourself!” It’s an admonishment we hand out freely to our children, but oh, how often we ourselves struggle with self-control. Whether it’s refraining from comfort-eating, getting to the gym, or holding a sharp tongue, everyone battles for control in some aspect of their lives. Over and over, the Bible encourages us to exercise self-control. But why? Would it really be so bad if you polished off that bag of sour cream and onion chips? Well...maybe. Kind of. Yes.

A huge part of our job as moms is to teach our kids how to make good decisions—the kind that keep them safe, healthy, and whole. No one needs to control themselves around a bowl of fresh spinach. Self-control helps us say no to things that can harm us. Let this verse shine a little perspective today:

*Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control (Proverbs 25:28, NIV).*

A city without walls is a city vulnerable to attack. Are there areas of your life you are leaving open to ruin? Where do your children need your help in this regard? Ask God to bless you with power over your own struggles and the wisdom to guide your children toward choices that will leave them fortified and strong.

DECEMBER 6

## Transformation

When we give our lives to God, we expect to be radically and completely changed from the inside out. We get frustrated and discouraged when we discover old habits are hard to break, and we keep getting ensnared in the same temptation.

It is tempting to quit. But we should be encouraged! We are new in Christ; his work in us is continual. Sanctification is a process—a very tough and painful one. But his grace will cover us and he promises to complete his work. He hasn't left us or abandoned us.

*I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns (Philippians 1:6, NLT).*

Lord, sometimes I'm so frustrated that I am not the person I want to be. Thank you that you are transforming me through your Spirit and by your Word. I look forward to your finished work in me.

DECEMBER 7

## *Faithful Direction*

There is no right way to arrange a household. Some homes might have a stay-at-home-parent, others have two working parents, and still others have single parents leading the charge. Whatever the situation, passion must be involved—for work, for children, or for the home. If that passion has yet to reveal itself, pray.

In order to hear what calling God has placed on our lives, we have to listen. And it can take a while. Fully understanding what God wants us to do with our lives can take years, and certain pieces of our calling might only surface for a season. When our hearts are radically changed, and we become passionate about a possibility, then we might have found a clue to our calling.

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you (Psalm 32:8, NIV).*

What do you think God has set you apart for? What are you most passionate about? Be patient. It takes time, prayer, and diligence to discern his voice. Rest assured, daughter, he has given you passion and he will direct your steps.



DECEMBER 8

## Words of Grace

How do babies learn to talk? We know this one: it's by listening. And they are listening all the time. Right around the age of two, your child either said or will say something so precocious (and possibly inappropriate), it could only have come from listening to—and imitating—you. It happens to all of us. Our face reddens, and we go about the difficult job of explaining why they shouldn't say something "Mommy always says."

No matter how old or young our children, it's vital we choose our words carefully. A daughter who hears her mother gossiping will likely become a gossip. A son who hears his mother nagging and criticizing often becomes critical himself. Children who continually hear their mothers' loving, life-giving conversations will grow up spreading love and life with their own words.

*Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone (Colossians 4:6, NIV).*

How does it make you feel when your children sound exactly like you? Are your conversations well-seasoned, inspiring your kids to speak graciously? Ask God to show you any areas you need to work on. Thank him for his grace.

## *Freedom to Soar*

Freedom is a wonderful thing! We live in a free country where we can worship God, speak our minds, and enjoy unlimited opportunities without fear or restraint. Yet in spite of these liberties, we sometimes feel bound to the humdrum routine of daily life—somewhat like a hamster in its wheel. There seems to be no way of escaping the routine of joyless living.

This is not God's plan for us. Life naturally consists of responsibilities that can seem relentless, but we can simultaneously soar like the eagles in joyful freedom. Are you feeling trapped by routine today? Take a moment and fix your eyes on Jesus, soak in his presence, feel the spark of divine life that was ignited in you when you first surrendered your heart to him. Thank him for freedom from sin, fear, bondage, and hopelessness. It was for freedom that Christ set us free!

*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free (Galatians 5:1, NIV).*

Lord, thank you for the incredible gift of freedom both in my country and in my soul! Help me face my tasks today with joy, and set my spirit free.

DECEMBER 10

## *Child of God*

There are so many benefits to being a child of God. Even in that phrase, child of God, our identity and calling are laid out. We are called to be his children. We get to remain in a parent-child relationship with God. That means we receive the blessing of being cared for all the days of our lives.

God wants to do his job. It is not an annoyance to him. We were very much in his plan from before the beginning of time. He awaited our arrival with great expectation and never grows weary of loving and providing for us. Our job, as laid out in Scripture, is simply to seek him.

*“Your Father knows exactly what you need  
even before you ask him!” (Matthew 6:8, NLT)*

How do you feel about letting God take care of you? He is the most stable provider you will ever know. Let him worry about taking care of you. He enjoys it.



DECEMBER 11

## Rusty

When you bring your car into a repair shop for an oil change and come out two weeks later with \$2000 in charges and brand new parts under your hood, you realize you may have been neglecting a few things. Your car hasn't run this well since you first bought it. All it took was some care, time, and new parts.

We all need newness at times. Newness brings rejuvenation and renewal of our hearts and minds. There is so much hope that comes from a God who promises us new life and refreshment when we seek his face first. It doesn't matter how long we've been getting "rusty," or how old or broken our parts, he welcomes us with open arms and a promise of unconditional love.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3, NRSV).*

Do you feel a little rusty? Ask Jesus to make you feel alive again. He knows exactly what to do to make you feel new.

DECEMBER 12

## *Insecurities*

Insecurities have a way of rising up, breaking the surface of our weary souls. They are known to whisper lies in the dead of night—we aren't worthy, we are disappointments and failures, we don't amount to anything. These insecurities leave us broken and empty. We are taught that brokenness equates to unworthiness; weakness is ugly and should be hidden. We are led to believe that a perfect life is a holy life.

But if we paused long enough to let God's words seep into our hearts, we would come to know that it is in our weakness that he is strong. In our brokenness, we are beautiful. In our imperfections, we come to know his grace. His truth has the power to break down every insecurity that we have.

*Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever (Psalm 73:25-26, NRSV).*

Are you letting insecurities get you down? With Christ, you can rise up against the lies and be confident that you are loved and worthy. Let his truth wash over you today.

DECEMBER 13

## *Hustle and Bustle*

Hustle and bustle. It can easily relate to the life of a mom. There are always things to do, and as our kids grow that list doesn't get shorter. We hustle when they are little because we are chasing them around. We hustle when they get older because they are involved in school, sports, and social activities. But it doesn't have to be that way. It really isn't about what's on the list; it's about what's in our hearts.

If we can't spend time playing with our kids, or we're signing them up for activities to keep up with those around us, it is time to examine our hearts. There are choices we can make that create less hustle and bustle for the people that matter most to us. It might mean saying no to activities and yes to quieter evenings at home. It feels good to say yes to the things that really matter in life.

*May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way (2 Thessalonians 3:16, NIV).*

Are you in a perpetual state of hustle and bustle? Start to find joy in the quiet things again. It will revitalize you and lift up your spirit when you're on the ground tickling your kids or curled up with popcorn and a movie.



DECEMBER 14

## *Praising God*

Have you ever noticed how taking the time to praise God seems to change everything? We are admonished to praise God in all circumstances. We have an entire book of the Bible filled with poems that were actually songs when they were written. God knows that when we praise, our hearts are filled with encouragement and joy.

We give our children a gift when we sing or play worship songs in the home. As we praise God, we remind ourselves of his attributes. We remember his love, and our hearts are encouraged. Children perceive this. Sometimes they don't have the words for why their hearts are heavy, but a mindful mother can help point them to Jesus simply by singing with, or over, them.

*I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart;*

*I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.*

*I will be glad and exult in you;*

*I will sing praise to your name, O Most High*

*(Psalm 9:1-2, ESV).*

Sometimes it is a discipline to sing. You won't always feel like it, but as you step out and thank God purely because he is worthy, you will find that your heart will follow your actions.

DECEMBER 15

## *Faithful Attender*

We serve a glorious God who likes to move us with his Spirit! He awakens our souls and puts a seal of love on our hearts. We might have days where we feel his presence constantly—the feeling of being alive, wanting to love, and knowing we're forgiven and free. If we could, we would grab hold of Jesus, our hands entwined with his, and never let go. Then, the next day comes with its distractions, and everything from the previous day is forgotten.

God is faithful. He remains. He shows up again and again. His presence is a fact not a feeling. The fullness of his presence comes at us, and our hearts feel alive, our tear-filled eyes spill over in joy, and hope is ours again. What a patient, loving, faithful Father we serve. Only he could keep showing up, awakening our spirits, and igniting a fire of love for him.

*O taste and see that the LORD is good;  
happy are those who take refuge in him (Psalm 34:8, NRSV).*

Where have you felt the presence of God? If you search for him, he can be found in everything.

DECEMBER 16

## The Money Ladder

We are abundantly blessed. It isn't always easy to see who is truly rich or poor because in the western world our viewpoint is skewed. If we own a car and even part of a house, we are some of the richest people in the world.

No matter where we are on the economic ladder, God asks us to do good, be generous, and put our hope in him. He will provide everything for our enjoyment. By holding true to these virtues in our lives, we lay a firm foundation for the coming age.

*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life (1 Timothy 6:17-19, NIV).*

Do you know you are abundantly cared for? Think through some times where God has come through for you financially. This life is temporary. Do good, be generous, and put your hope in God. True living comes later.



DECEMBER 17

## *It's Not Fair*

Jesus tells a wonderful story in Matthew 20 about a landowner who goes into town early one morning to find workers for his field. He agrees to pay them a fair daily wage. On four occasions throughout the rest of the day, he goes back and hires more workers.

At the end of the day, he lines them up. Those he hired last are paid first and receive the daily wage. Those who had been working all day assumed they would get more, but when their turn came they were given exactly what they were promised. “But that’s not fair!” they complain.

*“Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money?  
Or are you envious because I am generous?” (Matthew 20:15, NIV)*

“But that’s not fair!” If there is more than one person in your house, this accusation will surface. If you have more than one child, it will surface often. As hard as you try, discipline, attention, and even love are difficult to distribute evenly. When in doubt, follow God’s example and err on the side of generosity. Share your thoughts on fairness with God.

DECEMBER 18

## *Taking Account*

A financial advisor would ask you to take account for every last dollar spent over the course of three months. The reason for this exercise is to clearly show our priorities. Where does our money go? Once we know, we can readjust our spending according to our overall financial plan.

The same method could be applied to general living. Where do we spend our time? If we tracked the time we invested into our relationships with loved ones, would we come up short? When we feel like our relationship with God is lacking, it is good to evaluate where we devote the majority of our time and focus. Do we seek him? Do we spend time in his Word?

*“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”  
(Luke 12:34, NIV).*

God, I want to make you a priority in my life again. Help me to show you and others where my treasure and my heart really are.

DECEMBER 19

## *Abundant Life*

Many have suffered the trauma of having a thief break into their home. Perhaps you have. As you know, a thief's design is entirely selfish—to obtain his own desires no matter the cost to others. In a spiritual sense, the thief (Satan) has a similar motive, only with a much darker objective. He not only wants to steal your joy, your faith, and your very life, he wants the destruction of your soul.

In contrast to that, we have the good shepherd. He came not to take away, but to give abundantly! His gifts go beyond forgiveness and salvation from sin. He desires that our lives be more than simple, bare existence, but rather abundant and satisfying, blessed all the way from the present through eternity. Take this truth into your day and live exuberantly!

*“I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:9-10, NASB).*

Lord, help me recognize the attempts of the thief to rob me of my joy and faith. I thank you for being my good shepherd and showering my life with abundance.



DECEMBER 20

## Minimal

A more simple life. A life with less clutter. A life with less to-dos. A life where less is more. A life of margin. A life, simply put, less busy. All of these we might desire for ourselves, and yet, we have a really hard time getting there. There is always a laundry list of responsibility not allowing much room for margin.

It is okay to be happy with a calm life. It is okay to un-busy your very busy life. It is most definitely okay to start using the word no more often. On the other end of this very busy life, we will find less stress, less anxiety, and less disappointment.

*Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do (Ephesians 6:8, NLT).*

Jesus, my treasure is my relationship with you. It's not what I say or what I do. I know you desire my heart and I want to give it to you fully. Help me create a simpler life so I can hear your gentle whisper beckoning me to come.

DECEMBER 21

## *Necessity of Food*

We would never dare to send our kids to bed or to school without nourishment. They need a well-balanced diet to get through the day. They also need spiritual nourishment. We pray for them and give them opportunities to worship and read God's Word. Our desire for them is to be healthy and strong. So we feed them everything they need in both areas.

But how often do we allow ourselves to go without spiritual food? We too hunger for God's Word to feed us and need his presence to strengthen us. Parenting on empty will eventually lead us to burn out. We must make sure we are being fed.

*"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give up so that the world may have life" (John 6:51, NCV).*

Are you hungry for God's Word? Take some time to relish in the rich depth of his wisdom and love for you. His food will satisfy you and make you whole. There's no better food than that!

DECEMBER 22

## Gift-Giving

Give away your gifts. You probably feel like you do that every day as a mom. While it can be tiring, it is also truth. We might not feel like we are the best moms. We feel like we could do a better job respecting and loving others. We have moments of weakness. But God has given us gifts! He intricately designed us with specific purpose.

God asks us to be selfless. Giving away our gifts and doing everything for others can be exhausting. But God wants us to do it with joy. If we, as moms, daughters, and friends, can find our gifts, embrace them, and use them, we will see God's purpose.

*Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too (Philippians 2:2-4, NLT).*

Do you know the gifts the Lord has given you? Are you using them for his glory? You will find joy in sharing your gifts with others when you give them away expecting nothing in return.



DECEMBER 23

## Blessed to Give

There are lessons in the Bible so simple and true we can easily lose sight of their meaning. “It’s better to give than receive,” we say, without even thinking. To an average two-, nine-, or sixteen-year-old, is this true? Even the most emotionally and spiritually mature teenager may struggle with happily giving all their savings away instead of buying the latest gadget or trendiest new outfit.

We may even struggle with this one ourselves. Sure, it feels great to donate and to volunteer, and we love giving gifts to our children. But aren’t there days we’d really just like a new pair of boots, earrings, or maybe even golf clubs? How do we apply Paul’s words?

*You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:34-35, NIV).*

Perhaps the answer lies in the word blessed. Paul never implies Jesus said it was more fun. To be blessed is to be given divine favor or protection. Share these thoughts with your children.

## Jesus: My Christmas Song

Jesus, a Jew, came so all people would be qualified to experience his indescribable hope, joy, and peace as they placed their faith in him. It's not a wonder that a great band of angels joined together in praise that night. Jesus is the true basis for every believer's hope and joy, for this season and for all time.

You may be alone today or with many people. You may be reading this Christmas day, or you may be catching up after a flurry of activity. Perhaps you are flipping through this book, and you've stopped on this passage. Wherever you are, and whatever your circumstance, you have a gift from the Lord for this very day. It's okay; a Christmas gift from God doesn't expire! The gift God has for you, each and every day, is this: he is your strength and your song. And he always will be.

*“The Root of Jesse will spring up,  
one who will arise to rule over the nations;  
in him the Gentiles will hope” (Romans 15:12, NIV).*

Jesus, thank you for being my Christmas song. You are in touch with what I need to fill my soul, even when I do not know. Thank you for your kindness in coming to earth so I could become your child. The thought of this fills my soul with gratitude.

DECEMBER 25

## *Greatest Gift*

Have you ever considered what happened in heaven on the day earth received the greatest gift in the history of *forever*?

When Jesus became a man, he set aside the indescribable power of being fully God and instead embraced humility and weakness. For a time, the Father lost the immeasurable depth of relationship with his Son and had to watch as Jesus learned obedience through suffering. There is truly no greater sacrifice than what both Father and Son made to declare to us all that we are loved.

*“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17, NIV).*

Without the work of the Holy Spirit, the incarnation of Jesus would not have been possible. It is the same Spirit at work in you who reveals God’s deep love and offers you the opportunity to receive his gift. Think on that as you celebrate the season of giving.



DECEMBER 26

## Wisdom in Every Situation

All of life is a test. As we live each day, the tests we face teach us valuable lessons. It may seem backwards: usually lessons are learned to prepare us for a test. But in life, the test often comes first. Through the lessons, God gives us the wisdom we need for the next test.

It's a safe bet that the tests will keep coming. Thankfully, our hearts gain understanding every time. Tension and uncertainty melt away; joy blossoms. Solomon's advice is that we listen to wisdom, apply it, and learn as we go. Then we will have understanding; we will find the right path with wisdom in our hearts and joy from knowledge.

*Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair,  
and you will find the right way to go.*

*For wisdom will enter your heart,  
and knowledge will fill you with joy.*

*Wise choices will watch over you.*

*Understanding will keep you safe (Proverbs 2:9-11, NLT).*

God, you have taught me so many valuable lessons from life's tests. I take joy in the wisdom I have gained from those tests. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to make wise choices.

DECEMBER 27

## Deep Loss

Losing someone we love undeniably leaves a huge hole in the depths of our soul. It constantly aches as a reminder of what we lost. It is a crushing pain—a pain so deep and so fierce it's blinding. In that place of utter darkness, we aren't alone. God aches with us. It's his presence that eases our pain and comforts our broken hearts. He walks with us. He holds us up when grief rips us apart. He never leaves us in our despair.

When the weight of our loss becomes too much for us to carry, he carries it for us.

*“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”  
(Matthew 5:4, ESV).*

Are you wrestling with a painful loss? You don't have to mourn alone. Call out to God. He is there. In your sorrow, cling to the one who knows. He loves you more than you can possibly understand.

DECEMBER 28

## God's Plan

We all have hopes and desires for our little ones. We dream from their infancy about who they will become. We send them to the best schools, and enroll them in the right extracurricular activities to set them up for the best future possible.

What happens when what we have planned for them is not what God has planned? We can let go of our desires because God's plans for our children cannot compare to what we have imagined for them.

*Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart  
(Luke 2:51, NIV).*

What dreams do you have for your children? Are you okay with letting those dreams go if it means that they will be in the center of God's will? You can rejoice in releasing your children and watching them grow into the people God intended them to be.



DECEMBER 29

## No Choice

Think of looking into your child's face for the first time. Did you have to decide to love them, or were you overwhelmed immediately by their perfection and innocence? Loving our children is as natural as breathing. We really have no choice, do we? Yet we *do* choose them every day as we care for their needs and nurture their hearts.

Imagine how Jesus' disciples felt as they saw him for the first time, dropped their fishing nets, left their tax collecting businesses, said goodbye to their families—to everything in their known world—and began to follow him around the countryside. Their choice of this homeless, controversy-stirring teacher marked a turning point like no other. Yet just like us with our newborn babies, when faced with his presence and perfection, it really was no choice at all.

*“You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name” (John 15:16, NLT).*

Do you remember the day you chose to follow Jesus? Perhaps you were very young when you knew you wanted to walk with him, or possibly this decision was more recent. To choose Jesus is to be chosen by him. Spend some time reflecting on this powerful truth.

DECEMBER 30

## *Abounding Grace*

There are moments when we mothers are on our last nerve. We are sick of disciplining, of being backed into a corner, and we just don't know what to do. In those weaker moments—when we feel like we could cry, yell, or just give up—we can look at that face staring back at us and think of God's grace. We can remember all the times we've failed, and how it feels when he gives us grace.

Looking into the eyes of the child who has angered us, we silently pray, Help me in this moment, Father; give me grace. As we allow him to move through us, we can respond with a hug instead of crying, yelling, or hiding in the bathroom. What a gift it is to have a Father who forgives and forgets, who loves us despite our shortcomings, and whose grace and love for us never runs dry.

*Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16, NIV).*

Think of how it feels when you get down on your knees in repentance and you are washed clean. Think of the repeated moments of grace he has gifted you with, asking for nothing in return. Give your children the gift of grace as well.

DECEMBER 31

## *Prayer Life*

The prayer life of Jesus is inspiring. Like so many things, he lays out a model worth following. First, he prayed privately (see Luke 9:18). As busy moms, it isn't always easy to find the time, but we must realize that God is always available. He hears our every thought, so time is not an excusable factor. Prayer should be a top priority, not a last resort.

Second, the ninth chapter of Luke goes on to mention Jesus praying in a group setting (see Luke 9:28). Our relationship with God is personal, and Jesus encourages us to get alone to pray, but he also wants us to pray with others. We could find prayer groups, get some friends together, or pray with our kids. We should pray with other believers even when it isn't comfortable. It's an important part of worship.

*“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them”  
(Matthew 18:20, NIV).*

How is prayer an active part of your day? Do you need to take more time to pray alone or with other believers? Make conversation with Jesus a regular occurrence in your life.





