

BUILD A BRIDGE

Devotional

Melodi Leih | facebook.com/melodi.leih

We had only been at the church a few weeks when I met the pastor. He was kind and very interested in my work with The MomCo and told me right away, "We need a group here. Can you start one?"

"Of course I can start one!" I responded. I knew one other mom who had previously been part of a MomCo group, so we met and started thinking about how to get it going.

Our combined leadership experience allowed us to get things moving, but the first thing we needed to do was meet with the pastor. Understanding the church mission and vision for the group is vital to building a healthy group that will have longevity. We quickly discovered that the pastor and church leaders were our allies and our champions. This group was a pivotal piece in the long-term growth strategy for the church.

Over the years, I have been reminded how important it is to have a relationship with the church. Romans 12:4-5 says, "Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other" (NLT).

It's important to understand our MomCo Meetup doesn't stand on its own. We are in "partnership with the local church." Building this relationship and doing your part to cultivate it will ensure a rich season of ministry together.

Here are a few tips to help:

- **Spend time with your pastor or church ministry leader.** Make yourself known to your church leadership, so when you need support or resources, they can come alongside you.

- **Understand the church's mission and vision and how MomCo connects to it.** Your meetup is a ministry of your local church. You should know your church's mission so you can partner with them. Understanding how MomCo brings families to your church is vital for the growth of both the church and your meetup. How are the activities and events you are planning for MomCo supporting the mission of your church?
- **Share stories of life-changing impact.** Pastors want to hear about how MomCo is changing the lives of moms in their church. Be intentional about reporting to the church leadership how moms are meeting Jesus. Telling these powerful stories will help your pastor see even more clearly how MomCo supports the church's vision.
- **Be a good steward of resources.** Whether in finances, child care or the use of the building, be wise in how you use resources. Be sure you understand the expectations and church policies. Respect for the church builds trust and deepens the relationship between the group and the church.
- **Learn to say thank you often.** Remember, the church is your ally and your partner and wants what you want — to make a place where moms can connect and hear about Jesus.

Investing in a relationship with your church benefits both the group and the church. Hold tight to the reminder from Scripture that "we all belong to each other."



QUESTIONS

- *What is one thing you can do today to build a bridge with your church?*
- *Which of these tips do you need to focus on?*

THE SECRET TO JOY

Devotional

Destiny Leahy

I couldn't wait to start a family. But, those first few years as a stay-at-home mom (with three kids under four) wasn't how I always imagined it would be. Joy was often overshadowed by boredom, anxiety, or even unexpected anger. I wasn't the mom I had always hoped to be, and motherhood didn't give me the life purpose I expected. Sitting in the basement one afternoon playing 'kitchen' with my daughters, I remember praying: *God, I'm looking for more. More joy, more purpose, and please... more rest!*

The world has countless answers to the secret to joy. We're told it can be found in our families, our job, our possessions. And if not there, on a vacation or in the latest piece of technology; meeting friends for a drink or watching our kids excel at their extracurriculars.

And yet—what if it's not? More often, the job doesn't fulfill what it promised, we still struggle even after that Instagram-worthy vacation, and the excitement of our child winning the “big game” quickly fades. We've bought into the lie that if things could just change, we would finally relax and enjoy life.

Psalm 16:8-11 offers a powerful reminder of the unshakable security we find in God when we fix our eyes on Him. And it reminds us that when God is our focus, joy naturally follows.

I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure... 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 16:8-11, NIV

When David keeps his focus on God, instead of being eaten up by fear about what he cannot control, two things happen:

1. David's body experiences true rest; and
2. He understands his purpose in life.

Rest and purpose— isn't it what we all strive for? And rooted in the Lord's presence, David has found these—leading to a deep-seated joy.

It wasn't overnight, but looking back to that afternoon where I called out to God, I have a beautiful story of how He has used my spiritual growth, my MomCo community, and my passions to give me joy that has surpassed my wildest dreams.

“Return to me, and I will return to you,” God tells His people in Malachi 3:7. He answered my prayers when I started living fully for Him! And while life definitely didn't slow down, I found true rest, purpose, and joy.

It's time to Enjoy the Joy. Be absorbed by it!

QUESTIONS

- *Take a close look at how you are focusing on God lately. Are you living passionately for Him?*

BE STILL

Devotional

Melodi Leih / facebook.com/melodi.leih

“Be still, and know that I am God.”

— Psalm 46:10 NIV

It started like any other storm. The steady rhythm of the rain continued throughout the day until a thunderous sound broke the peaceful rhythm. I went to the window and saw bare tree branches blowing in the wind and rain that looked as if someone was standing on my roof with a hose. Torrents of water flowed down, creating streams through my yard. I had never seen nor heard a storm quite like this.

Fear began to rise within me, and I found myself wanting to hide under a blanket and wait for it to pass. In that moment, something caught my eye from the window. A splash of red sat still on the bending tree branch. I took a second look and saw the most beautiful red cardinal sitting peacefully in the storm.

There was no urgency to leave, no apparent fear of the storm—just quiet confidence that all was well.

This scene outside my window was a visual reminder of the way God cares for me. There are days where the storm rages inside of me. Broken relationships, difficult circumstances and issues of the day can create an unsteadiness within me. What anchors me in these moments is the reminder that “God is my refuge and strength.”

Psalm 46 has some strong reminders of this truth:

- He is help in trouble.
- He is calm to our fear.
- God is in the midst of all things.
- He brings peace.
- The Lord of hosts is with us.
- He is exalted among the nations.
- And a second reminder...the Lord of hosts is with us.

I watched that red bird from my window for what seemed to be hours. I was captivated by its stillness in the midst of what appeared to be out of control. Something within me stilled too. A quiet, gentle reminder. “Be still and know that I am God.”

God has got you, my friend, in whatever storm may be raging around you. Find refuge and strength in his love. Find peace in knowing the Lord of hosts is with you.

QUESTIONS

- *Is there a storm within you that needs to be stilled?*
 - *Take a few moments to identify what is making you fearful or unsteady. Write it down and release it.*
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I AM LOVED

Devotional

Jennifer Iverson / jenniferiverson.com

I imagine we all have hard things in our past — experiences of rejection or hurt, times we felt shame or disappointment or even memories of pain and sorrow. And, often times, these experiences impact how we view ourselves.

For me, personally, I can hear my spouse or close friend say, “I love you” and believe them, but it is hard for me to let that sink deep in my soul and really know and understand that I am loved. Recently, a friend asked me, “When you think about God, how do you think he sees you? What do you think he thinks about you?”

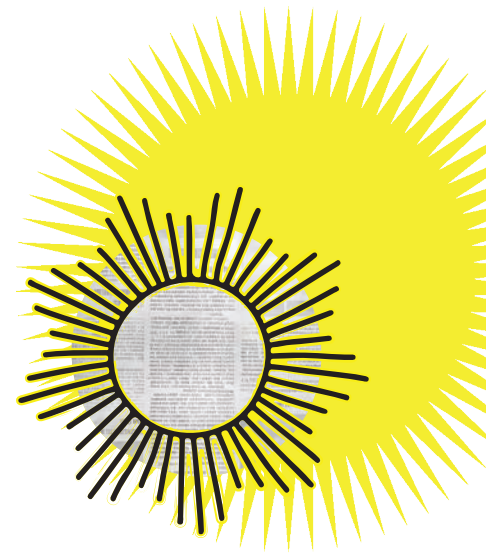
My honest answer was “I think he is disappointed in me. He knows my potential, and he sees how far I am from what he had planned. I think he looks at me and is sad.”

With gentle words, my friend began to quote Romans 8:38-39 to me.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV)

When God looks at me, he sees love. He loves me. Jesus’ death on the cross covered all of my sin — it covered everything that could be disappointing. All God sees is the woman he created and calls his child.

The things and people of this earth will be disappointing. Experiences may bring hurt. There will be pain and sorrow. But through all of it, there is a God that loves us with an everlasting, as in never-ending, love. God loves me. God loves you — all of you. Let that sink deep down.



QUESTIONS

- *When you think about God, how do you think he sees you? What do you think he thinks about you?*
- *Say, out loud and slowly, “Nothing can separate me from the love of God.” When you try to make an excuse for why it isn’t true, just repeat Romans 8:38-39 to yourself again.*

TRUSTING GOD WITH YOUR BODY

Devotional

Bethany Clarkson / bethanyclarkson.eyeofthewalr.us

As a teenager, I was at war with my body. I believed that if I could just be thinner, I would be more loved, more accepted, and finally feel like I was enough. I obsessed over calories, skipped meals, and let my worth be dictated by a number on the scale. But no matter how much weight I lost, it was never enough.

I remember reading Psalm 139:14 (NIV) *"I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well,"* but I struggled to believe it. How could my body be wonderful when all I saw were flaws? How could I be fearfully made when I felt so worthless? I wanted to believe that God saw me differently than I saw myself, but the lies of insecurity were louder than His truth.

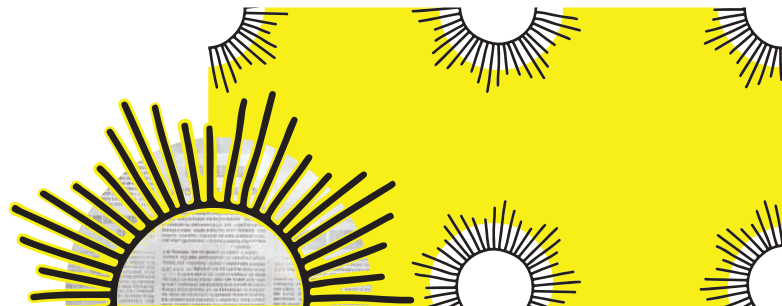
By God's grace, I eventually began to heal. I learned that my worth wasn't found in my appearance but in my identity as His beloved child. I started to shift my focus from shrinking my body to strengthening my spirit. But years later, as an adult, the struggle resurfaced. Stress, expectations and comparison triggered those old patterns. I told myself I had outgrown this issue, but the truth was, I had never fully surrendered it. I wanted control over my body more than I wanted to trust God with it. Once again, I found myself at war with my body. Every glance in the mirror felt like a battle, every meal like an obstacle. Deep down, I knew this wasn't

true—I knew I was harming myself—but the fear of letting go felt even more overwhelming than the damage I was causing.

In my lowest moments, God met me again. I clung to Isaiah 41:10 (NIV) *"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."* Healing wasn't about perfection; it was about surrender. God wasn't asking me to fix myself...he was asking me to trust him with the body he created.

I began to see my body not as something to shrink, but as a vessel for his glory. Honoring my body didn't mean punishing it—it meant treating it with care, respect, and gratitude. I learned that true freedom comes not in controlling my body, but in surrendering it to the one who created it.

If you struggle with body image, know this: God delights in you, just as you are. He calls you loved, chosen, and whole—not because of what you look like, but because of who he is.



QUESTIONS

- *In what ways do you struggle to trust God with your body and health?*
- *How can you begin to see your body as a temple of the Holy Spirit rather than something to control or change?*

MAKE IT AWKWARD

Devotional

Bethany Clarkson / bethanyclarkson.eyeofthewalr.us

My best friend once told me that I was weird. Offended, I quickly clapped back, insisting that I wasn't weird at all! She replied, "You just told me a story about how hamsters eat their babies!" She then paused for a moment, smirked and said, "You're right. You're not weird. ... You're just awkward." And, in that moment, I had no choice but to agree.

I've always been socially awkward — the kind of person who overthinks every interaction, laughs a little too loudly at the wrong time and stumbles over words when talking to someone new. I send texts, reread them 10 times and still manage to regret what I said. And I rehearse conversations in my head, only for them to go completely off script when I actually speak.

But you know what? I've come to embrace it. Awkwardness makes life unpredictable, and, sometimes, it even makes for the best stories. So yeah, I might be awkward, but at least I'm entertaining!

And come to find out ... being awkward is a gift God gave me to open doors for conversations. Talking about faith, identity or even emotions can be uncomfortable — especially when the world is sending messages that contradict God's truth. But here's the reality: If we don't speak up, someone else will. And often, the world's voice is louder and bolder.

Jesus never shied away from awkward or uncomfortable conversations. In John 4, He spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well, addressing her past and offering her living water (John 4:13-14). It was a conversation that broke cultural norms, challenged her heart and led to transformation. Jesus didn't avoid the tough topics — He leaned in with love and truth.

Faith conversations aren't meant to be reserved for church services or bedtime prayers. They should happen in the everyday moments!

It may feel awkward at first to ask others about their thoughts on God, struggles with temptation or what they're hearing from friends. But silence is not an option. Esther 4:14 (NIV) reminds us, *"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"*

What if making it awkward is actually making a difference? What if your willingness to engage in hard conversations plants seeds of truth in a person's heart that will take root for years to come?

Don't wait for the perfect moment. It may never come. Instead, embrace the awkwardness, trust God's wisdom and lead with love and courage.

QUESTIONS

- *What conversations have you avoided because they feel awkward?*
 - *How can you create an environment where people feel safe discussing difficult topics with you?*
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WHEN TEARS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

Devotional

Molinda Hern

"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, NIV

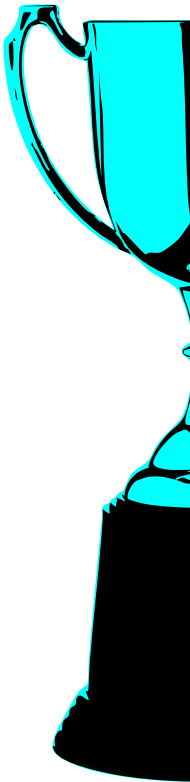
Loss is such a small word for something that leaves an enormous, gaping space in your heart. When I lost my son, Bobby, I struggled to put my grief into words. There were moments when all I could do was cry, feeling as if my tears were the only language my heart could speak. In those moments, I wondered, "Does God see this? Does he care?" The weight of loss felt unbearable — until I realized that Jesus weeps with me.

I also learned that my husband and I processed grief very differently. While I needed to talk through my emotions, he tended to grieve more privately. At times, this difference made me feel alone in my sorrow. But I came to understand that grief is not a one-size-fits-all journey. It looks different for everyone, and that's okay. Learning to extend grace to each other in the midst of grief was part of our healing process.

Grief often comes like waves. Some days, the grief is gentle, brushing softly at your feet. Other days, it crashes over you with a force that feels unbearable. In those moments, it may feel as if you are drowning, but you are not alone. Just as Jesus reached out to Peter when he was sinking, he reaches out to you too. Even in the deepest sorrow, his hand is there, holding you steady when you feel like you are being pulled under.

God does not dismiss your grief. He does not tell you to "move on." Instead, he collects every tear, acknowledging your pain in a way no one else can. Even Jesus, when faced with the sorrow of loss, wept (John 11:35). He didn't offer quick fixes or empty reassurances—he simply stood in the grief with those who were mourning. And he stands with you now.

Dear mama, your tears are not wasted. Your story is not over. The pain you are walking through now will not always feel this heavy. Over time, God has gently taken the shattered pieces of my heart and rebuilt them into something new — a testimony of his faithfulness, his healing and his ability to bring beauty from ashes. There is hope ahead, even when you can't see it yet. Your grief is not unnoticed. And your child is not forgotten. Whether you cry every day or only in quiet moments, know that Jesus meets you in your sorrow. Allow yourself to grieve without guilt, knowing that your pain is safe in his hands. In time, as he walks with you, he will also lead you into healing. Healing does not mean forgetting but rather learning how to carry love and loss together. Also, if others in your life grieve differently than you do, remember to extend grace to them just as you would want grace extended to you.



QUESTIONS

- Have you felt pressure to "move on" from your grief? How can you give yourself permission to grieve fully?
- How does knowing that God collects your tears bring comfort to your heart?
- How can you extend grace to those who grieve differently than you?

OWN YOUR STORY

Devotional

Bethany Clarkson / bethanyclarkson.eyeofthewalr.us

A friend recently told me that I have an incredible story. Over the years, she's learned more about my past, and with each revelation, she gains a deeper understanding of how I became who I am. Each of us has a story written by the hand of God—some chapters filled with joy, others with pain, and many still unfolding.

I don't like to hold back when sharing my story because I believe that through it, I can help someone else. Whether it's the unexpected joy of an unplanned pregnancy or the deep trauma of sexual assault, your story is yours—own it! I want people to know that their story matters, that others have faced the unimaginable and survived, and most importantly, that they are not alone. No matter how difficult the journey is, there is hope, strength, and a community of people who understand and care.

As mothers, we often get caught up in the daily routines of caring for our families, managing responsibilities, and trying to be everything to everyone. In the midst of this, it's easy to compare our journey to others, feeling like our story isn't as meaningful, exciting, or valuable. But God reminds us that our story—our unique experiences, struggles, and triumphs—has a purpose.

We see throughout Scripture how God uses stories for his glory. Consider Esther. She was an orphan raised by her cousin Mordecai, yet God used her to save an entire nation. When she hesitated in stepping into her calling, Mordecai reminded her in Esther 4:14, "And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" You, too, were created for such a time as this. Your story—your experiences, joys, and even the struggles—is shaping you for a purpose only you can fulfill.

Instead of comparing your story to someone else's, embrace it. Own it. Your story is a testimony of God's faithfulness. The challenges you have overcome, the lessons you have learned, and the love you pour into your family each day all matter. Romans 8:28 reminds us, "*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose*" (ESV).

Moms, God has entrusted you with this journey. Own your story and allow him to use it to bless others. You never know who needs to hear your testimony, who needs encouragement from your experiences, or how your obedience in this season will impact generations to come.

QUESTIONS

- *In what ways have you seen God's faithfulness in your story, even in difficult seasons?*
 - *How can you embrace and share your journey to encourage others?*
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IT'S YOUR TURN

Devotional

Jen VanKommer / substack.com/@jenvankommer

Do you ever feel like you're constantly giving? As parents, this is our life. Every day, we sacrifice so many things — time, energy, attention — to make sure our littles are happy and healthy.

But with our kiddos on the receiving end of our giving so much of the day, how can we have anything left to give to God?

When my daughter was three and my son was just a baby, I distinctly remember the weight of guilt I carried for not being able to “get my act together” spiritually.

There was also an extra layer of pressure because of my role in ministry. For years, I served as a missionary overseas. But when I became a mom and began the (often overwhelming) work of serving a tiny human, I suddenly felt like a spiritual imposter.

My “quiet times” of in-depth Bible study and journaling my prayers were a thing of the past. Volunteering at church? Another habit gone by the wayside.

“Other moms do this!” I thought. “What is wrong with me?”

But you know what, Mama? God gave me a gentle revelation that changed everything:

What if your spiritual life in this season of motherhood is not about what you can give to God, but what he can give to you?

Psalms 86:15 says, “But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (NIV).

Let that sink in, Mama. God is “boundless” in his love for you! That means that even on the days you yell at your kids, God’s love for you is still as strong as ever.

God is also generous in grace. That means that even if you fall asleep with an unopened Bible in your lap, or you miss church (again!) because your tinies are sick (again!), God’s got you.

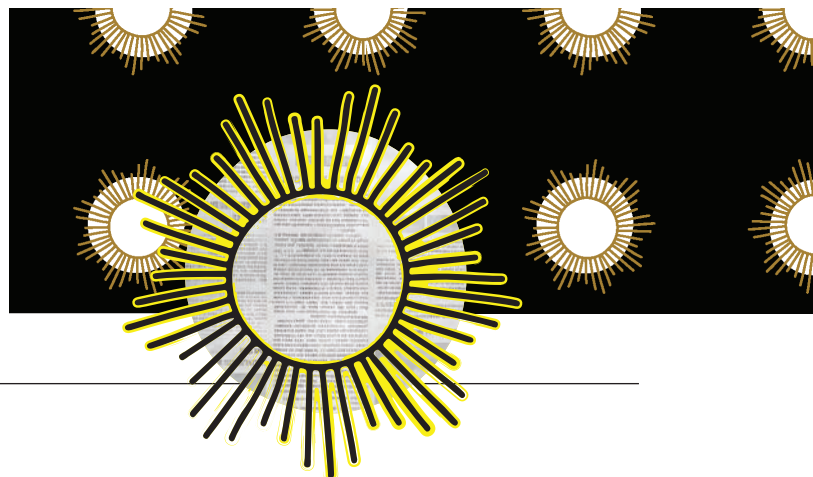
Remember Paul’s powerful words in 2 Timothy 2:13: “if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself” (NIV).

Even when you’re exhausted and just can’t give anymore, God will always show up for you.

Remember, God is a parent too. If anyone knows about giving, he does. And He never grows tired of lavishing his children with love (1 John 3:1).

That’s you, Mama. You are God’s child. And it’s your turn to receive.

How can you allow the Lord to show you his faithfulness in this season?



ORDINARY PEOPLE

Devotional

Izabella McMillon / themom.co/occ

"The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus."

- Acts 4:13 NLT

It is never a good thing when the phone rings in the middle of the day and the number calling is the school my kids attend. My heart dropped when I got one of those dreaded phone calls in the middle of the day. My son, Kaleb, ran into a pole full speed while playing wall-ball, and the sharp edges of the pole sliced a deep gash into his forehead. Lots of blood, some tears, and seven stitches later, he is on the mend and will be ok.

That evening I witnessed the sweetest moment. During our family prayer time Kaleb thanked Jesus for protecting his eye and his brain. Even though he had seven stitches, there was much to be thankful for, indeed. He recognized God's hand in it all. Only when we spend time with Jesus consistently is it possible for us to recognize his care in our trials. Kaleb has no formal theological training. He is an ordinary boy who simply understood Jesus' presence because he spends time with him on a regular basis.

In the book of Acts we see what happens when ordinary people spend time with Jesus.

Peter and John had been called before the religious leaders for preaching. They were ordinary people who had no special training in the

Scriptures. In Acts 4:4 we see that 5,000 people were saved as a result of their preaching. This stirred up the religious leaders, who not too long ago had crucified Jesus. Do not miss the significance of Peter and John just being ordinary, untrained people who made a difference!

I am sure that many of us often feel unqualified to make a difference for Christ. But there is good news! God loves to work through those who feel unqualified to make a difference for Christ.

God's love and power become evident when ordinary people spend time with Jesus!

So, let's stop worrying about our qualifications for making a difference for Christ. Truth is, none of us are qualified. What we need instead is to recognize Jesus in our circumstances.

The way Kaleb proclaimed Jesus's power that evening in his prayer, was powerful. No formal training, no real understanding of theology, just simple faith and recognition of Jesus' presence.

For years to come Kaleb will have quite the scar on his forehead; a great conversation starter about the lurking dangers of wall-ball, but hopefully also a conversation starter about God's protection and a proclamation of who Jesus is in his life.

Can you imagine what might happen if we, as ordinary moms, would recognize and proclaim Jesus in all things? Then we could see God's power on display!

QUESTIONS

- What lies are you believing which imply you are unqualified to make a difference for Christ?
- What do you need to change so you can spend regular time with Jesus to experience his presence?

THE POWER OF KIND WORDS

Devotional

Andrea Fortenberry | andreafortenberry.com

When I was in high school, my 11th grade English teacher had us complete an assignment that impacted me deeply. Every day for a month she drew a student's name out of a jar. She gave everyone in the class a slip of paper and asked us to write something positive and encouraging about the student of the day. It would be anonymous so that we were free to write from the heart.

Later, she typed out everyone's thoughts about each student, printed them on decorative paper, and gave them to us at the end of the school year. This simple sheet of paper is one of the most meaningful gifts I've ever received. Twenty-five years later, I still have it framed in my office.

I learned a lot from Mrs. Flaherty that year, but the most impactful thing I learned from her came from that gift of an assignment: she showed me that kind words are powerful and that it's often the small things that can make a big difference in someone's life.

Here are some small but intentional steps we can take to speak kindness to others:

Be Approachable

You've likely seen the phrase, "She leaves a little sparkle wherever she goes," on a greeting card or t-shirt. Isn't it a great aspiration for us to leave our little corner of the planet a little more sparkly than before?

Some of the simplest ways we can do this are to look people in the eye, smile at them, and be the first to say, "Hello!" It costs us nothing, but it communicates that they are seen and that they matter. It makes us approachable and invites conversation.

We can also approach others bravely. If we keep our eyes open for moms we see at the park or the grocery store and invite them to MomCo, it can change their lives.

Be Encouraging

Proverbs 12:25 NIV tells us, "Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up."

The words we speak over others have the potential to refresh them and breathe life into their souls. Let's be encouraging with our words and tell people how we feel about them, whether it's in person, via text message or in a handwritten card. Tell them they're doing a great job or that you're proud of them. You never know how much they needed to hear it.

Be Prayerful

We may never know the impact of our prayers this side of heaven, but God tells us that prayer changes things (James 5:16).

You can write down your prayers, send them to a friend in an audio message, or just pray as you go about your day. Prayer is a double blessing: not only does it impact the people we're praying for, but it also brings us closer to God and changes us, as well.

QUESTIONS

- How have kind words impacted your life?
- Who can you extend kind words to today?

THE BIBLICAL FAST

Devotional

Kelli Jordan / kellijordan.blog

According to the Bible, fasting means humbling yourself in the sight of God. In our modern time, people fast for a lot of reasons — medical needs, weight loss, political attention (like a hunger strike) — but biblical fasting isn't about these things. Biblical fasting is about humbling yourself and truly seeking God. 1 Peter 5:5 says, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble" (NIV). Fasting is humbling yourself before God to gain his favor while you pray.

I was not raised in a church or family that fasted, and I wasn't familiar with the biblical command to fast until it was introduced to me as a new coordinator of a MomCo Meetup. The leader before me was committed to fasting and praying specifically for our group twice a month, and she helped me understand the value of this spiritual discipline. The idea was a little scary to me at first, but as I started to lean into it, God revealed to me that fasting is not about what I'm giving up: It's about what I am learning as I lean more fully into my relationship with him.

Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV) gives us some direction in how to fast.

When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Fast. This verse says WHEN you fast, not IF you fast. Just as Jesus expects his followers to pray and give, He also expects us to make fasting a regular part of our relationship with Him. There are a lot of things we can give up as Christians — social media, television, certain activities — but biblical fasting is about abstaining from food.

Fast humbly. Don't be a show-off by acting pious, put out or discouraged by the effort of fasting. This part of the fasting command is why I tended to not talk about my efforts — because it was supposed to be private between God and me. But as our church has focused on fasting this year, I realized that being willing to talk about it with others who are also practicing this discipline, and those who haven't yet tried it, will encourage them in their faith walk. There is a difference between boasting about it and sharing your experience.

Fast joyfully and expectantly. Verse 17 says to anoint your head and "wash your face." In Jesus' day, this was a sign of rejoicing. Verse 18 says the Father will see, and we will be rewarded. And when God makes a promise, he always keeps it. Fasting without prayer and expectation is just skipping a meal: It doesn't build our faith. Ask great things from God and expect him to answer. Jesus' command to fast is an invitation from our Creator and Savior to spend focused, prayerful time with him. You can fast in the regular rhythm of your day but start your fast with specific prayer points and spiritual purpose in mind. What are you struggling with? What are you concerned about? What is keeping you up at night? Where do you need guidance? Who in your circle needs focused prayer on their behalf? List those things ahead of time.

Then, in the moments when your flesh reminds you that you want food (either because you see others eating, your stomach rumbles or you smell the neighbor's burgers on the grill), remember that your fleshly desires are temporary, but God's promises and provision are eternal. Remind yourself that God is the one that sustains you.

When will you fast? Schedule it now. I promise that God will bless it. And, more importantly, God promises it!

BEAUTY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF AWKWARD

Devotional

Peter Mutabazi | worldvision.org

"I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you invited me in."

—Matthew 25:35 (NIV)

When I was a child living on the streets of Uganda, an unexpected encounter with a stranger changed the trajectory of my life. I remember the first interaction with this stranger. "What's your name?" he asked me, something that had never happened before. No one had ever cared to know my name. At first, I felt awkward—confused, even—but in that awkward moment, everything changed.

For the first time, I was seen, valued, and given an opportunity. That moment of being noticed when I had always been ignored became a starting point for the life transformation that would take place to follow.

Years later, I found myself stepping into awkwardness again. This time, as a foster parent, I welcomed children who had experienced deep trauma. These children entered my home as strangers, burdened by fear and pain. Yet in those moments of discomfort, healing began. Love grew. Family was built.

Jesus calls us to see others as he does—to embrace the vulnerable, to feed the hungry, to welcome the stranger. Often, these invitations come in unexpected ways, requiring us to step beyond our comfort zones. But on the other side of the awkwardness, we find connection, healing, and the transformative power of love.

Today, consider where God might be asking you to step into the awkward. Whether it's opening your home, reaching out to someone in need, or responding with compassion in an uncomfortable situation, trust that he is already there, working through you. And remember, your willingness to lean in—even when it's messy—is shaping your kids in ways you can't yet see. Keep trusting him, even in the chaos, because he is moving right there with you.



QUESTIONS

- Can you recall a time when stepping into an uncomfortable situation led to a blessing or deeper connection? How did God show up in that moment?
- Who in your life might be feeling unseen or unloved? How can you take a step toward them today, even if it feels awkward?

ASKING FOR HELP

Devotional

Kirby Rader / www.faithandfields.com

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

— Galatians 6:2, NIV

God does have a sense of humor, doesn't He? It makes me smile to look back at times in my life when I know He wrote the chapter just to prove I needed more than my own two hands! None are quite so obvious as having three babies at the same time. Yes, triplets!

Those first two years, I carried three kids a lot — and, yes, sometimes all at once — to their cribs, to the recliner, to their table to eat, outside to play, to and from the car. It was a big, wiggly job.

And I've always liked to go after most things in life like I do carrying those three babies around — by myself, relying on my own strength, without the burden of needing anybody else.

I don't know if I asked for help much when I was little. As a teenager and young adult, I tried to do a whole lot on my own. Needing help felt weak.

Having triplets, and then four under the age of 4, made it glaringly obvious that I had an issue with pride.

I would have rather made healthy and beautiful meals daily, had a perfectly clean and tidy home, and been well rested in fresh clothes with my hair washed every day. But in those days with little to no sleep, wonderful people brought us yummy food and stayed to play despite the mess — our kitchen sink full of dishes, a trash can full of diapers and floors covered in toys.

Do you know what I found? The only one going in and out of our door that expected me to have it all together was me!

During those early times with new babies, God taught me to reach out. Even when I wasn't quite sure I needed the help, I would still ask. And now that the girls are a little older and their needs continue to change — and in some ways get bigger (emotions anyone?) — I'm glad that God already has me warmed up in this exercise!

I still need to remind myself of this sometimes, but I now know that asking for help and relying on others is not a sign of personal weakness. Needing others, or even just feeling brave enough to ask for help, has opened my heart to new memories and relationships.



QUESTIONS

- *What do you need to ask for help with these days?*
 - *Why does it feel brave to reach out for help when you're feeling vulnerable?*
-

MEETING HIM IN THE MESS

Devotional

Kendra Roehl | theruthexperience.com

“So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.”

— Luke 2:4-5, NIV

I knew it was inevitable. As soon as I finished placing the activities into our family calendar, I had all the proof I needed that December would be busy. Nearly every day was filled with appointments, notes and to-dos that covered the calendar square and wound along the edge of the page.

And although I knew the month included good and fun things, I secretly dreaded it.

A week into December, I broke down after dinner.

“I’m already tired,” I admitted to my husband as I wiped down the counters.

“What do you mean, Kendra?” he asked.

“The month has only begun,” I continued, “but already we have things scheduled almost every night, and it doesn’t stop until Christmas. We’re only a few days in, and I’m already behind on our Advent devotional reading with the kids. Our house is messy, I haven’t finished decorating, and the thought of squeezing cookie baking and gift wrapping into the already full calendar stresses me out—it just feels like a lot.”

Kyle agreed.

After putting our kids to bed that night, we pulled out our monthly calendar and

reevaluated our schedule. We decided which events and obligations to keep and what we could let go of. And we planned how to incorporate the activities that were important to us and let go of the ones that weren’t really necessary.

Our experience that year reminds me of the first Advent. The months leading up to the birth of Jesus were messy and unexpected, to say the least, as was the birth itself: He was born miles and miles from home—not even in a house but in a stable. He was born among animals. Far from family. Placed in a manger filled with hay. Surrounded by shepherds who’d just come from the fields to see the baby born to be the Savior of the world. This scene was not what most of us would plan for or anticipate, yet that is what God chose to do, and none of it was unexpected to him.

If God was willing to come into the world in such a messy, unforeseen way, I don’t believe he’s put off by or disappointed in the messiness of our lives. In fact, maybe that’s just the place he likes to show up the most. When we aren’t perfectly coiffed but instead muddled by the cares of this world, when all we’re holding is a glimmer of hope that the promise of Advent will bring something meaningful, wonderful and joyful to our lives—that’s his favorite time to meet us. In the mess.

Because of this truth, we don’t have to hide or put on a show. We can be our whole selves, smooth and rough edges alike. He sees it all and loves us anyway. He is our peace, our comfort and even our joy.

QUESTIONS

- Read Luke 2:1-20. Notice all the unexpected twists and messiness of Jesus’ arrival. How does this comfort you as you consider your life circumstances this Christmas season?
- Spend time being honest with God. Bring your stressors, fears and joys to him. Ask him to help you let go of the cares that weigh you down and open your heart to accept the peace he offers in this busy time of year.

STAY IN STEP

Devotional

Kelli Jordan / kellijordan.blog

Have you ever yearned for balance in your life—that illusive mixture of work/home/fun that will satisfy your need for fulfillment, creativity and provide the resources you need? As good as that sounds, I think if we are searching for balance, we may be searching for the wrong thing.

Balance is defined as an even distribution of weight enabling something to remain upright and steady or a condition in which different elements are equal. As moms, there are times we strive for things to be equal—the number of chores each child is assigned, the amount we spend on children for their birthday or how many times they each get to pick the game we are playing. Outside of those things, I don't know that I want all other things to be equal.

What I am really looking for is a good rhythm—one that allows strong and weak things to alternate in a way that creates a steady flow. One that is sustainable, satisfying and highlights my priorities.

Galatians 5:22-25 says: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." (ESV)

It's pretty clear from these verses what kind of rhythm God wants for me. He wants me to be in step with the Spirit and, when I am, the world will see those good fruits playing out in my life. When I'm out of step, when my rhythm is off, my family and co-workers see my impatience, frustration, anger or indifference leading the way.

There was a time in my work life that I found myself using the word "irritated" to describe my feelings a lot. Even if I didn't say it out loud, I was irritated by many things—work projects, co-workers, and also by the people at home. I decided I wasn't going to use the word "irritated" anymore, so I started using words like annoyed, frustrated, or—my favorite—exasperated. Obviously, it's basically the same thing.

It wasn't until I went to God, confessing that this was not the fruit I wanted to display, that I realized I felt this way because I was neglecting relationships with people who could encourage me and that I wasn't spending enough time listening to God. Once I asked him to help shift my focus and shape a better rhythm, he was able to replace those feelings with much kinder, gentler ones.

If you feel out of step, this may be the time to shift your thinking, talk to God about your own personal rhythm and then take brave steps to live in it. Focusing on your rhythm rather than striving for balance may be enough of a shift to bring new direction and purpose to your steps.

QUESTIONS

- *How do you feel about the rhythm of your life right now?*
- *What needs to be adjusted to make sure your personal rhythm is in step with God's Spirit?*

NAVIGATING GRIEF

Devotional

Melodi Leih / facebook.com/melodi.leih

We stood in line over an hour for a roller coaster. I watched it go forward and backward many times. I got this. No big deal.

It was our turn. I stepped in and contemplated stepping out, but I didn't. I sat down, pulling the restraint as tight as I could against my chest. As soon as I was locked in, I changed my mind. Before I could say "No, let me off, I don't want to do this," the ride took off. Like being shot from a cannon, I screamed until I had no voice, wishing the whole time I could get off.

I felt this again when my mom died. My insides felt like they were back on that ride. All I could do was scream and cry, "I don't want to do this." That same feeling came the day of her funeral. We pulled up to the cemetery. I slowly got out of the car. As I rounded the back of the car, I could see her casket. In my mind that just did not seem right. This is not really happening. My daughter approached and I simply said, "I don't want to do this."

Navigating loss is hard. It doesn't matter what the loss is. Loss can be the death of a loved one, a relationship, a marriage—loss of a job, a significant move, loss of independence—any unexpected event in your life. With loss comes grief and mourning. We are left grieving what we thought would be and recognition that grief is the cost of love.

C.S. Lewis, in his book *A Grief Observed* says, "Grief is like a long valley. A winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape."

Wherever you are on this journey, be encouraged by these thoughts:

- *Be kind to yourself. Give yourself time and permission to feel.*
- *Journal. Write a letter; add detailed memories to read later.*
- *Talk to someone. Seeking help can prevent grief from growing beyond what you can handle. Join a Grief Share support group, talk to a pastor. Talking to someone doesn't make you weak, it makes you wise.*
- *Recognize that grief affects everyone. You are not alone. Everyone experiences hurt and loss at some point. The only way forward, is through.*
- *Expect grief to recur. There is no timetable for grief. It will come and go.*
- *Be the one to show up and be present for people. You don't need to have words or know what to do, you just need to be present.*
- *Moving forward doesn't mean forgetting. Getting through means you keep living, keep having new experiences all while still loving who or what you lost.*

Joy and sorrow can coexist when love is the root of your loss. If you are grieving today, I'm sorry and my heart is with you. If you are wondering if there is reason to hope or keep moving forward, there is—it's Jesus. Lift your head. You are loved and there are good days ahead.

QUESTIONS

- *If you are holding grief, what is one step you can take today to move you forward?*
 - *How does Jeremiah 31:13 speak hope to your heart?*
-

EMBRACE THE UNEXPECTED

Devotional

Abby Kruse

Motherhood is a journey filled with unexpected moments, and I've learned that the joys of raising children aren't always elaborate. While first smiles, baby giggles and Christmas mornings are unforgettable, the everyday moments often bring the most unexpected joys. As a busy mom of three teen and tween girls, with a calendar full of activities and a car full of teenagers, I've realized that the true gifts of motherhood lie in the simple things that make us smile when we least expect them.

I was inspired to write this because—let's face it—my creative energy is stretched thin these days. So, I turned to my mom village to hear their thoughts on the small joys that sneak up on us in the middle of ordinary life.

The responses were heartwarming and full of truth. Some shared memories of the early days—the feeling of picking up a sleepy baby who reaches up for you, a reminder that you're their whole world. And quieter joys, like watching your kids stick up for a friend or discovering their own relationship with God. My personal favorite? When my older kids still want to hold my hand or give me a hug in public, long after it's considered “uncool.”

Or the joy of seeing your husband coach your kids through challenges, tell goofy dad jokes, or read to them at night. It reminds me that our family is built on love and teamwork. Joy looks different as kids grow older. I was reminded of this recently at my daughters' cross-country meet, where my older daughters, who are as different as night and day, encouraged each other as teammates. It was a simple moment, but it deeply struck me. I hadn't realized how much I would cherish seeing them support and confide in each other.

Mamas of littles, here's something to look forward to: when your teens tuck you in at night because they stay up later than you do. Some of the best conversations happen during those tuck-ins.

Psalm 16:8-11 beautifully reminds us to find joy, even in difficult seasons, by trusting God's guidance. Motherhood is full of challenges, but in those moments of unexpected joy, we are reminded of His goodness and blessings.

Here are a few joyful, relatable moments shared by my village:

- Teaching your kids family recipes.
- The bliss of a full night's sleep.
- When they leap off the bus after their first day of kindergarten.
- Footie pajamas, enough said.
- Having your child work hard and achieve goals.
- Watching your kids become big brothers and sisters.
- Baby food faces, yes please!
- Car ride chats that turn into jam sessions.
- The comedy of passing gas—never gets old.
- Living room dance parties.
- A built-in exercise buddy—strollers count!
- When others compliment your child's character. No better feeling.
- School pictures—we have some doozies.

And let's not forget the everyday miracles:

- A cup of coffee that's actually hot—it is possible!
- An interior car wash—your car feels like a luxury ride instead of a goldfish explosion.
- Carrying a purse without diapers. But baby wipes (did you know they take out tire grease?) and snacks will remain. Let's not get carried away.

When the days feel long and the laundry piles up, take a moment to reflect on your own motherhood journey. Sweet, small moments bring laughter, comfort and gratitude. Though there will be hard days, I hope you choose to notice the goodness that is nestled right there within them.

QUESTIONS

- *What unexpected joy has made you smile recently?*
- *How has your definition of joy changed as your kids have grown?*

AUDACIOUS FAITH

Devotional

Stacey Morgan / staceymorgan2000.com

The caller ID on my cell said Beth, a woman I knew from church. To call her my friend would have been a stretch—acquaintance was more accurate. We'd exchanged pleasantries occasionally, and I'd asked about her work or tattoos. Honestly, I didn't even remember giving her my number. I answered, assuming it was an accidental butt-dial. But it was Beth, and she revealed she had admitted herself to the hospital 24 hours earlier for suicidal ideations. They needed to discharge her and she needed somewhere safe to go. She asked if I would pick her up and let her stay with me for a day or two.

For a moment, I was speechless. I hardly knew this woman. My husband was deployed, so I was the only adult at home. Yes, I had an open guest room, but could I invite someone struggling with something so serious when I felt so ignorant of what to expect?

I stammered, "Okay," not knowing what else to say. Less than two hours later, Beth stood before me in my guest room, her small overnight bag in hand. Her face was exhausted and her eyes were filled with tears. She asked if she could sleep for a while. "Of course," I said, "Whatever you need."

She slept for two days, with only brief breaks to shower or eat. I was an overwhelmed bundle of nerves, worried I might need to intervene or if her family even knew where she was. I checked on her almost hourly and texted a mutual friend for advice.

"Why did she call ME?" I asked. "What am I supposed to DO?"

"Who knows," she replied. "The important thing is that when she needed a place to go, free from judgment or shame, she thought of you. You were a safe harbor, so just be that."

Whenever I nervously checked on Beth, I prayed, "God, tell me what to do! I'm overwhelmed!" Each time, God answered with a reminder of John 14:27 (NIV): "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid," and a simple whisper, "Just be."

And so I did. As a doer, it was hard not to have a list of tasks to perform. Instead, I was called to sit on my couch and patiently wait. When Beth eventually emerged and said she was ready to go home, I helped her pack and gave her a hug goodbye.

Sometimes our faith calls for bold, loud actions proclaiming our love of Jesus to the world. Other times, it's quiet and still, witnessed only by an audience of one, but equally courageous in putting our faith into motion. When the call comes, will you be ready?

QUESTIONS

- *Have you ever felt God prompting to do something audacious, but you were afraid to say "Yes" because you weren't sure what would come next?*

A DIVINE BLESSING

Devotional

Bethany Clarkson / bethanyclarkson.eyeofthewalr.us

Marriage is one of God's greatest gifts, designed to reflect his love, commitment, and joy. A strong, healthy marriage not only brings fulfillment to the couple but also serves as a foundation for a thriving family and community. Within this sacred union, intimacy is not only permitted but encouraged as a beautiful and essential part of a healthy relationship. Unfortunately, many couples struggle with guilt, discomfort, or routine when it comes to sex. But Scripture reminds us that intimacy between a husband and wife is a divine blessing meant to be celebrated.

"Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth... be intoxicated always in her love."
— Proverbs 5:18-19 (ESV)

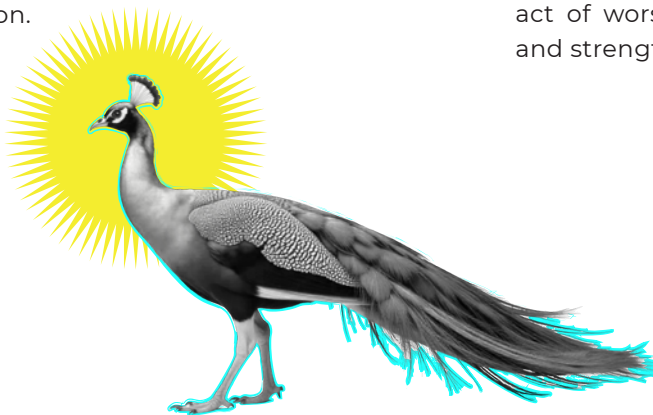
A healthy marriage—one rooted in love, communication, and trust—creates a secure and nurturing environment for both spouses and their family. When a marriage is strong, it provides stability for children, sets a godly example for others, and contributes to emotional and spiritual well-being. Conversely, a struggling marriage filled with resentment, neglect, or unfulfilled intimacy can lead to brokenness, loneliness, and even temptation outside of the relationship. That's why it is crucial to cultivate not just companionship, but deep emotional and physical connection.

Too often, societal pressures, past experiences, or cultural taboos create shame or hesitation around sexual expression within marriage. But the Bible celebrates the beauty of intimacy. The Song of Solomon, for example, is filled with poetic descriptions of passion and desire between a husband and wife. God did not intend for sex to be dull, obligatory, or shameful—he designed it to be a fulfilling and joyful part of marriage.

"The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband."
— 1 Corinthians 7:3 (NIV)

This verse reminds us that intimacy is not just about personal satisfaction but about selfless love. It is an opportunity to honor your spouse, to strengthen your connection, and to foster deeper emotional and physical intimacy. That means prioritizing each other's needs, being open to new experiences, and communicating desires and boundaries with honesty and grace.

So, embrace the freedom that God has given you in marriage. Explore, experiment, and enjoy the gift of intimacy with your spouse. Let go of guilt, break free from monotony, and cultivate a passion that deepens your love. When done with love and respect, sexual intimacy becomes an act of worship—one that honors God's design and strengthens the sacred bond you share.



A FRIEND LOVES AT ALL TIMES

Devotional

Bethany Clarkson / bethanyclarkson.eyeofthewalr.us

Friendship is one of God's greatest blessings. True friends walk alongside us in life, offering encouragement, love and support in both joyful and difficult times. God designed us for relationships, not isolation, and through friendships, we experience His love in tangible ways.

In April 2019, after attending the first meeting of a new neighborhood book club, an acquaintance offered me a ride home. Having recently moved to the area and knowing only a few people, I gladly accepted. As we drove, she asked how I was doing and mentioned seeing my recent social media post about having surgery. Overwhelmed with emotion, I began to cry and said, "I have cancer." What was meant to be a brief three-minute drive turned into a heartfelt 45-minute conversation in her car — one that deepened our connection and changed the course of our friendship.

Whenever people ask how we met, she always jokes, "I was just trying to be nice and offer her a ride, but then she pulled the cancer card." Six years later, she's not just an acquaintance: She's one of my closest friends.

The Bible speaks extensively about the value of friendship. Proverbs 17:17 reminds us, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity" (NIV). True friends are there for us in every season, not just during the good times but also when life becomes challenging. They stand beside us, offering wisdom, prayer and encouragement when we need it most.

Jesus himself also set an example of deep, selfless friendship. In John 15:13, he tells his disciples, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (NIV). Jesus demonstrated this love when he sacrificed his life for us. His example teaches us that true friendship is not about what we can gain but about how we can serve, uplift and love others selflessly.

Friendships require effort, patience and, sometimes, even forgiveness. As we navigate relationships, we should seek to be the kind of friend that Jesus calls us to be — loving, encouraging and faithful. It's also important to surround ourselves with godly friends who will help us grow in faith, hold us accountable and remind us of God's promises.

Take a moment to reflect on your friendships:

- *Are you being a Christ-like friend?*
- *Are there relationships you need to strengthen or perhaps reconcile?*

Ask God for guidance in cultivating friendships that honor him.



PRIORITIZING FRIENDSHIP

Devotional

Simi John / simijohn.tv

My first plane ride was from Kerala, India, to Dallas, Texas. I was seven—filled with excitement to fly on an airplane and join my mom's side of the family, who had moved to America before I was born. My most prized possession was a tiny notebook filled with notes and addresses of all my friends from the small private Catholic school I attended. I had promised to send handwritten letters to my childhood friends but never did. I had no idea how different life would be for my family in just a few days.

Like any typical immigrant family leaving everything familiar behind, we were now learning and adjusting to all the new things and living in survival mode. And for a seven-year-old, survival meant finding friendship. As an extrovert, I struggled as I stood in the shade watching all the kids play on the playground at recess. I didn't have any friends in third or fourth grade. By fifth grade, I was finally playing tag and laughing with Chelsea, Nick, and Adam. It felt good. But then middle school came, and we all had to go to different schools.

That familiar survival instinct kicked in again—I needed to find a new community. I saw three girls with brown skin and black hair like mine, so I befriended them. Erika, Naomi, and Lydia became my middle school best friends—until the next inevitable shake-up a few years later.

This pattern followed me through adolescence and adulthood. I was great at starting friendships but not sustaining them, because deep down, I believed my friends wouldn't stay long enough.

Now that I'm forty, I'm no longer interested in shallow, temporary friendships—because age has made me wiser. My sisterhood is no longer based on survival; it is built on being with safe people where we can have brave conversations and share both the hard and the good together. But as we grow older, it requires effort and commitment because our plates are fuller than ever. I still struggle with female friendships, but I have found the pace and place where they can truly flourish.

Let's Talk About Pace

We are all busy and on the verge of burnout. Committing to one more thing can seem overwhelming, but our issue is not a capacity problem—it's a priority problem. As women, we are often guilty of prioritizing everyone else's needs, while neglecting our own wellness. But we aren't heroes, we are humans who need people too.

Let's Talk About Place

Friendships were always formed on the playground, not in the classroom. We need to make room in our lives to be with others where we can experience rest, creativity, and fun—away from responsibilities and distractions. Relationships don't deepen through hurried conversations in passing; they grow in the margin of shared experiences.

Choosing Friendship

Choosing friendship starts with choosing the right pace and place. Friendship isn't just about survival—it's about thriving together, and it starts with slowing down and showing up.

QUESTIONS

- *How can I change my pace to prioritize friendship?*
- *How can I create or find places to have shared experiences with others?*

CREATING RESILIENCE AND RESOURCEFULNESS IN OUR KIDS

Devotional

Stacey Morgan / staceymorgan2000.com

I thought it was a big deal when I decided I was done making my kids' lunches for school. It was my least favorite chore, and when a friend pointed out that they had no problem making snack buffets 15 minutes before dinner, the lightbulb went off.

"From now on, you will all be making your lunches," I declared while they moaned from the couch. "Look at me," I thought, "raising resilient and resourceful adults, one life skill at a time. Always good to give your kids healthy life challenges!" I smiled as I mentally gave myself a congratulatory high five.

But a few years later, when my husband suggested moving overseas while our daughters were between the ages of 13 and 17, I was hesitant. Mentally, I flashed back to my teenage angst, the stability I felt in my childhood bedroom that remained unchanged for decades and the stress involved with making new friends and reinventing myself in a new place — emotions I've felt even as an adult.

"I don't know." I fretted. "That's a lot to ask of them."

"Let's just see what they think of the idea," he proposed.

Assuming the worst, I imagined buckets of tears, loud bangs of slammed doors and years of therapy bills associated with ripping them away from the life they knew and loved.

To my surprise, there wasn't as much drama as I feared. While there were weepy faces and hard conversations, our girls proved they were more resilient than I expected. They made new friends, started new hobbies and adapted quickly to a new lifestyle. They embraced every moment in that foreign country, and when our time was up, they mourned but began adapting to our next place, just as they had before. They found true resilience and resourcefulness within themselves, because they had to — vital life skills that I hope they tap into every time God prompts them to make a bold change that requires a painful transition to something new.

If left to my angst and tainted memories, I would have robbed them of the opportunity to build that resilience. As Romans 8:28 says, "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (NIV).

Shielding my children from challenges, sadness or grief is no better than protecting them from ease, happiness or peace. God uses it all for his good, and when we model what it looks like to trust him, it builds the spiritual resilience and resourcefulness they will need to navigate this world.

Don't shelter your children from challenges or change. Jump in first, invite them to jump in with you and trust God to handle the rest.

QUESTIONS

- *Is there a challenge you have tried to keep from your kids that might actually be an opportunity to build resilience or resourcefulness?*
-