

Mothering, A Marathon, Not a Sprint

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Today's Treasure

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
Isaiah 40:29

In response to a blog I wrote on overwhelmed young moms, a tired mother asked, "What if those overwhelming days seem to be blending into each other? I know my children are my ministry, but I really don't feel up to the job. I keep praying, but I must not be hearing God's response. He allowed me to be in this place at this time so why do I feel I can't do this?" Wendy is expressing what many mothers experience every day and I promised her I would post a response to her plea for help. Here are some of my thoughts based on my own parenting years.

LIFE-GIVING ENCOURAGEMENT

1. Parenting is a marathon, not a sprint. Accept it - you will have bad days mixed in with good moments. After our son's kindergarten teacher saw how discouraged I was with his classroom behavior, she touched my shoulder, smiled and said, "This, too, shall pass!" I realized this "bad behavior" was normal and part of my job was to help him grow in grace. Such change wouldn't happen overnight. When you blow it, take comfort:

*"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

2. Marathon runners look forward to the cups of water offered from the sidelines. Mommies need to look for and accept cups of cold water that refresh just enough to get her through the next leg of the race. God offers us the Living Water through a personal relationship to Jesus. We find refreshing, life-giving water in His Word. Before you immediately respond that an overwhelmed young mom doesn't have time to comb her hair let alone spend time in the Word, listen carefully. We do what's important to us. If we view time in the Word as critical to our sanity, we'll find time to make it happen.

But here's the caution. There is no recipe or one way to cultivate intimacy with Christ. Don't pile guilt on if you can't spend an hour a day in the scriptures! As a young mom, I kept a Christian radio station playing in our home and our car. Praise music was always in the background and once in a while, I heard a clip of a speaker or interview that was just the right encouragement for the moment. Write out key scriptures and post them strategically around your home, at the kitchen sink, in the laundry room, on the bathroom mirror. Pray for your children before you get out of bed. Take ten minutes before your kiddies get up and read a quick devotional designed for young moms or from the classics "My Utmost for His Highest" or "Streams in the Desert". Plan periodic times where you can spend more time in the Word, perhaps once a month or once a week. Don't miss the joy because of self-imposed guilt caused by your inability to have morning devotions every day.

The Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion.

For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him.

Isaiah 30:18

3. Look for a Titus 2 woman (an older woman) to be your cheerleader and help mother you. The Apostle Paul taught the young Pastor Titus how to instruct the older women of the church, who in turn taught the younger women how to love their husbands and their children, among other things. Attend a women's Bible study and look for a prayer warrior who will pray for you and your children. If you can't find a woman like this, read books (yes, take time to read) or listen to podcasts by women you admire. As a young mom, some of my mentors were women I never met, some who were no longer living on this earth.

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4. Don't overlook the role a single woman can have in your life. Some of the best helpers with our children were young single women who loved children and they made my life richer by their insights and longing for intimacy with Christ. Experience God's graciousness and compassion through such relationships:

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5. Make your relationship to Jesus obvious to your children by the way you pray with them throughout the day, perhaps praying for the person in the rushing ambulance or the family next door or for daddy at work. Talk to Jesus as though He is right there because He is:

*For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you,
"Do not fear. I will help you."
Isaiah 41:14*

How about it, girls? How would you answer Wendy's plea for tips on building confidence as a mommy?

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