

Just Remember

BY JENNIFER MARTIN

Mother's Day is perfectly placed in spring time with new growth all around. Beauty emerges from the ground after a long season of hibernation. The dull sky gives way to glorious sunrises and sunsets. Baby bunnies and chicks are spotted all around.

Every Mother's Day at my church, I love how the pastor recognizes the moms in attendance on Sunday. At the same time, I also have a tug at my heart in the moment he calls us to stand. The tug is a reminder that some women there might not be able to celebrate the new growth of a child within them or the fussy baby who keeps them up at night. The small pitter-patter of little feet doesn't echo in their homes, yet. My heart tugs as I remember when I was the woman who couldn't stand for several years. The one whose heart longed for a child, but my arms were empty on Mother's Day. I remember the loneliness of that moment and the sideways glance I gave my husband looking for strength and reassurance.

Now, when I stand as a mother, I also remember the motherhood journey I've been on with four miscarriages, heartache and deep sorrow. My eyes always scan those nearby. I wonder and pray for those who might be feeling the same emptiness in their heart that I once felt. It's easy in those moments to take for granted the blessings God has given me, so I try to remember.

As you hug your children and give thanks for the life you have been given, I encourage you to be mindful of those who may not be in your shoes, yet or who have recently lost a child. This Mother's Day, remember them and give them a hug, too.

— PRAYER —

Jesus I pray for each mom today who is celebrating the joy of motherhood. I come before you advocating in prayer as well for those whose wombs are empty and long for a child. I pray you open their wombs and fill their hearts with the hope and joy only you, Jesus, can give. In your name I pray. Amen.



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#momfail

BY JENNIFER IVERSON

Scroll through social media and you'll see these posts – moms like me who feel less than adequate. We want the best for our kids and sometimes we mistake the best to mean a life without problems. We don't want the baby to cry, so we do everything to soothe them. That's exactly what a mom is supposed to do! We don't want them to get injured, so we watch them carefully and stay close while they play on the playground. That is what a mom is supposed to do!

Then there are the harder things. You want them to be kind, truthful and loving. We want them to grow up to be successful. We don't want them to suffer. We don't want them to go without the things they need or want. We don't want them to hurt – physically or emotionally. We know that type of pain and we don't like it.

Even just a few days into motherhood, you learn quickly that you cannot save your kids from all pain and suffering. Their first trip to the pediatrician confirms that belief. What I do know is that each of those hardships I have lived through, endured and survived has made me who I am today. They have made me kind and truthful and loving. They have made me resilient, compassionate and strong, and maybe a little snarky.

One such incident happened a few years ago. Money was very tight for my family. So tight, I was measuring and rationing out milk for my kids at dinner. That right there feels like an instant **#momfail**. What kind of mom can't provide for her family?

A dear friend unexpectedly stopped by one day before they left on vacation. In her hand was a gallon of milk. She didn't want it to go bad while they were gone and wondered if we could use it. God's provision for our family came in the form of a friend with milk. With tears in my eyes, I thanked her for her kindness.

At the time, it was hard to put into words, but I realize now that her act of kindness meant more to me because we were struggling. No one wants to struggle, but sometimes it is necessary. Just like we can't see the stars until it gets dark, what if we don't develop character without struggle? That character, kindness, truthfulness and loving attitude that I want my children to develop isn't going to happen without having some of their own struggles. They need to experience that so they can see God's provision for themselves.

*So that **#momfail** might
really be a **#characterlesson**
or **#learningopportunity** or
#winforGod.*

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Wisdom From My Mothering Journey



BY MELODI LEIH

I blinked. I've been a mom for 26 years and you'd think I'd know not to blink. Somewhere between catching lizards, dirty knees, soccer games, black belt exams, band concerts, girls and boys, my children grew up. How did we get here so fast? I know I am not alone in that thought. Whether you've just given birth or your child is graduating kindergarten or high school, the mom heart is the same. So, since it's Mother's Day and I'm a little further down the road in my mom journey than some of you, I wanted to share a few things I've learned along the way:

- Every season has its challenges and celebrations. One thing is certain, once you feel you've mastered the season you are in, the next one will come. What I've learned is God always gives you what you need for the season you are in.
- Acknowledge "lasts" and celebrate "nexts." Our mom hearts tend to be emotional when it comes to "lasts." So, instead of sitting in the sadness, celebrate what's to come. There really is no "last" when it comes to growth because the "next" allows for new opportunities and new learning.
- Show up. Be present with your kids. Build block towers, take walks, smell the flowers. Prioritize what is important – time with them. Teach them to show up for others. Serve together, invest in relationships – they matter.
- Love their dad. Let your kids see how much you love their dad. Married, single or divorced, it is important you show your kids how to love others. Some days are hard and some people are harder than others, but regardless of the circumstance, let your kids see you love well.
- Expect the unexpected. Your best laid plans can be interrupted at any moment. Just go with it. Trust God with your dreams and plans for your kids and your family. He is way ahead of you.
- Pray every day. Pray for their friends, future spouse and their choices. The fervent prayer of a righteous man (woman) avails much (James 5:16).
- Remember they belong to Jesus. While we love our kids more than our hearts can contain, Jesus loves them more. They are a gift from him to us, created in heaven long before they were given to us (Psalm 139). He will never leave them. Trust that. Teach them to love him.

I have struggled on my mom journey with every one of these things and I still do. Now that my kids are adults, there is a new learning curve. I wonder if I have loved deeply enough, modeled Jesus enough, taught them the right lessons, set them up for success as adults and so many more "I wonder ifs." The one thing I know for sure is that being a mom is the most significant, life giving and exhausting job I will ever have, and as I look at my adult children, I can see every investment made has been worth it.

— QUESTION —

What lessons are you learning on your mom journey? How can you use those lessons today to encourage another mom?

— PRAYER —

Jesus, thank you for the gift of being a mom. Bless us as we love, teach and inspire our families to love well. Teach us to enjoy the moments and trust you with our kids. Today, help my mom friends see how much they matter to you and their kids.

Perspective

BY SHERRI CRANDALL

I remember being pregnant with my first child, standing in line at the grocery store when the woman in front of me asked if this was my first baby. I replied with an enthusiastic, “Yes!” and she went on to tell me everything negative about being a mom: “You will never sleep again, your body is no longer yours, and it takes forever to get the weight off.” She told me about temper tantrums, potty training and then went on a long rant about teenagers. At this point, I was so annoyed and overwhelmed by her words, I just wanted to leave my cart full of groceries and sprint (more like waddle) out the front door. I was eager to get away.

I was thankful when it was my turn to check out and had a reprieve from the barrage of nightmare mommy stories. I remember feeling sorry for this woman at the time and honestly, in some strange way, I owe her a thank you. That day on the ride back home, I promised myself that I would enjoy every step of the way in my parenting and that even when it was hard, I would acknowledge it for what it was, a hard moment.

I must confess that all of those things she shared with me that day were true. However, she only told a portion of the story. She left out parts of the story about how you can’t even imagine the love you can feel for someone until the second you lay your eyes on that beautiful baby placed in your arms. The giggles and games. The bedtime stories and snuggles. The chances to cheer them on at their games and concerts, and the late night talks with teenagers (they’re the best)! Yes, being a mom can be hard, but being a mom has brought me more joy than I could have ever thought possible. It’s all about a perspective change.



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Don't Say I Am Only

BY MANDY ARIOTO



Jeremiah was a prophet, someone whom God used to spread a message to God's people. We read about his life in a book both written by and named for him. Jeremiah was a man who did awesome things for God, but he also had moments of doubt where he questioned if he had what it took to do anything significant. As he questioned, God reminded Jeremiah who he was. In the very first chapter of Jeremiah, he shared a conversation he had with God, and this is how it went:

*Jeremiah says,
"Hold it, Master GOD! Look at me.
I don't know anything. I'm only a boy!"
GOD told me, "Don't say, 'I'm only a boy.'
I'll tell you where to go and you'll go there.
I'll tell you what to say and you'll say it.
Don't be afraid of a soul.
I'll be right there, looking after you."
That is GOD's Decree.
GOD reached out, touched my mouth, and said,
"Look! I've just put my words in your mouth –
hand-delivered!
See what I've done? I've given you a job to do ...
- Jeremiah 1:6-9 (MSG)*

If you are anything like me, you might need an occasional reminder just like Jeremiah received. In moments when we say, "but God I am only (fill in the blank)," God takes our "I am only" feelings of inadequacy and replaces them with facts:

Don't say I am only ...

I will tell you where to go.

I will tell you what to say.

Don't be afraid of anyone or anything.

I am right here looking after you.

I have given you a job to do.

Scripture is for all of us, which means the words God spoke over Jeremiah are the same words God is speaking over you right now.

— QUESTION —

What is the "I am only" statement that you have on repeat in your head that is keeping you stuck or holding you back?

— PRAYER —

God will you confirm that you have called me, in spite of my feelings of being inadequate, for the task ahead? May I be someone who goes where you tell me to go and says what you tell me to say. Make me fearless because you are with me.

The Bestest Day I Never Saw



BY ANDREA JONES

“Mama, this is the bestest day I never saw!” Aly’s 3-year-old language mastery warms my heart. She continues to say “never” when in fact she means “ever.” I cherish her ability to live so fully in the present and find such joy and delight in every day moments.

On our walks in the summer sun she shows me every flower and cloud and again declares, “This is the bestest day I never saw!”

One warm summer day as she danced from sprinkler to sprinkler and pulled every dandelion she could find to spread its beauty across the lawn, shaking its soft, willowy, seedy parts, she again pronounced, “This is the bestest day I never saw!”

When we make her favorite chicken pasta meal, she carefully pulls up a dining chair beside me and while mixing the garlic and lemon into the butter with one hand, she places her other hand on my shoulder and again beams, “This is the bestest day I never saw, Mama!”

One day while gathering all of the laundry and sorting everything by color, she again proudly questioned, “Mama, don’t you think this is the bestest day we never saw?”

With every declaration, my understanding sharpens. She associates our togetherness and every day doings as being a thing to celebrate wildly and completely. It seems to me this would be a good posture as I walk through the everydayness of life. Whether chore, necessity or pleasure, it seems to be a gift of all gifts to have eyes to see “the bestest day I ever saw” in today.

— QUESTION —

How can you make space to see the gifts in the everydayness of your life?
How might you commit to treasuring togetherness with your family and friends this week?

— PRAYER —

God, may we see your goodness and know your love more deeply in the everydayness of this journey of motherhood. Increase our strength and pour out your peace and mercy. Show us how to celebrate the brilliance and beauty as well as the hard places of motherhood every day. May we have eyes to see, “the bestest day we EVER saw!” Amen.

*Everything GOD does is right –
the trademark on all his works is love.
GOD’s there, listening for all who pray,
for all who pray and mean it.
He does what’s best for those who fear him –
hears them call out, and saves them.
GOD sticks by all who love him ...
- Psalm 145: 17-20a (MSG)*