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Connect

# Who am I

This morning as I think about myself as a mom I've worked out that I've been a mom for approximately 3580 days (give or take). This sounds like an impressive number, but as I think about my girls and how far we still have to go it leaves me humbled rather than proud. Especially if I compare myself to God who has been our Father (and mother) for approximately 735 840 days (since Jesus was born). Who am I that God would choose me to be a mom, to raise two beautiful children for Him in his kingdom. Who am I?

**I am loved** - "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. **John 3:16 NLT**

**I am precious and honoured** - 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 43:4 NLT**

**I am chosen** - But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. **1 Peter 2:9 NLT**

**I am forgiven** - Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! **Psalms 32:1 NLT**

**I am blameless** - Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. **Colossians 1:22 NLT**

**I am accepted** - Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory. **Romans 15:7 NLT**

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And there are many more. And because of these Scriptures I can go into my day every day knowing that I have everything I need to be a great mom, equipped to do every good work he has planned for me.

**"For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13**

**(If you have Internet access you tube 'Who am i' by Casting Crowns.)**

*Jacky Smith*

# me and Them (PART 1)

**As a young mother I was told 3 things that had a huge impact on my parenting.**

1. If I'm ok, they will be ok!
2. Always love more than you discipline
3. That God gently leads those with young!

My Favorite: Isaiah 40: 1

## **Women set the tone in the house. Proverbs 14:1-3**

We tend to not look after ourselves and put especially the kids and household before our needs. That could lead to over-exhaustion irritability and resentment . But if we put first things first. Fix our eyes on Jesus and by surrendering to Him the day could be very different. Trusting Him !!

## **Dealing with anxiety.**

When I become anxious I become overbearing, controlling, overanalyzing, overprotective and emotional. The scary one comes out.

## **Psalm 91:1-2**

Words I see are dwell, rest, shelter.

In 2014/15 I spent many nights anxious over things in my boys characters partnered with tears and heart palpitations even panic attacks which I thought was a heart attack ... gulp.

So one night I spent 4 hours studying out anxiety and how I should rather deal with my fears. Here are some thoughts.

## **James 1:6**

If I doubted I was one tossed like a wave in the sea...not a nice picture.

Again words of trust and believe and I need to ASK.

Anxiety is like a rocking chair ,no matter how fast you rock ,you still get nowhere.

Stop focusing on the worries and fears ... rather think of how blessed you are .

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**Hebrews 12:1-2**

List your fears vs Gods promises vs your blessings.

What attacks your mind and threatens you to believe in Gods promises ?

When I now feel anxious or doubts creep up, I treat it as an impure thought. I refuse to be gripped by it! Because I have the best Father on my side.

If I doubt in Jesus, I minimize His death.

*Karen Swartz*

## *me and Them* (PART 2)

**Psalm 130:5**

I wait and in His word I put my hope.

You see if you don't read and pray, you take your eyes of Him and doubts will set in.

So after a 4 hour quiet time I woke up a new person ... don't be overwhelmed. That was the extent of MY anxiety. I needed to read and fill my cup with hope .

**Jonah 2:6-9**

**Romans 8:26-28**

**Philippians 4:6**

Direct your path to surrender and you can trust in His promises and peace will follow. Cling to the Holy Spirit and the word for support when you feel weak then your fears and doubts will fade. You now know that you are doing the best you can, You are not alone in this.

**Psalm 46: 1,2,10**

*Karen Swartz*

*with God*

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# Me and Them (PART 3)

## 1. The goal is the relationship

Ephesians 4:29 , Proverbs 15:1

Always build up where you can. Think about what you say. Use opportunities to celebrate their life. We use birthdays and Father's Day to say what we love about this person. It's so encouraging and upbuilding.

1 Corinth 13 :4-7

LOVE is kind, patient, not easily angered, protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres  
Lead by example ....if you want them to be kind and have grace for you ... you need to live that way. Other good character traits are being friendly, honest. Being respectful is important to me as it sets the tone on how they treat God and even their wives/husbands one day.

## 2. Be a listener

Colossians 3:2

Early on learn to hear them, what are they trying to say.

Teach them to express there feelings [MAD, GLAD, BAD, SAD].

Repeat what you think they are saying.

Its part of teaching them respect for themselves and others ... to listen and to be heard.

Choose your battles, you can't discipline them on everything. They can't be like little cleaning soldiers, sometimes playing with them in the mess is more important than neatness. Choose relationship.

## 3. Get lots of advice

Proverbs 3, Tim 3:4

Truly without my kingdom-family's advice over 26 years I could never go. It takes humility and vulnerability.

Karen Swartz



# Ask for what you need

John 14 vs 13 (NLT)

"You can ask for anything in my name and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father"

As a brand-new young mom, the trap I fell into frequently was to insist on doing everything myself. You see, secretly, I wanted to be complimented about how good I was; that motherhood was becoming of me. The compliments came, and the more they came, the more I wanted to show the world that I was not just a good-enough mom, but a supermom...with 'secret' powers! Oh my goodness, when I look back now, I realise how I lost the opportunity to be on Jesus' team...helping Him bring glory to God.

Initially, you will cope. However, as the long, sometimes sleepless nights become more frequent, there will be the temptation to want to handle everything ... for whatever reason that resonates with you.

No-one has superpowers, not you, not your partner, not your family and certainly not your friends. They cannot supernaturally figure out what you need. You will have to ask for what you need. Of course, set boundaries around unsolicited advice because those can make you feel inadequate ... but, do ask for what you need.

It takes courage, vulnerability and humility. But remember, by asking for what you need, you are actually helping the Son, glorify His Father! And that, is super amazing...

*Funeka Plaatjie-Njobeni*

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# Our changing world

So often we think of our world as our circumstances: where we live, what our job is, whether we are married and have kids or not. How we feel about our world is often determined by what is going on around us. If someone asks us how things are going, sometimes we refer to how the external things are going. Right now reality could be how well your baby is sleeping and eating. 😊

Psychologists are seeing that more and more stress is measured internally and not so much externally. They are seeing this in the different ways that people deal with the same circumstances. One person may get irritated in traffic and looking across at another car we may see another person relaxed and singing in the same traffic. They are seeing that how we feel is less strongly determined by our external circumstances and more strongly determined by how we view those circumstances. We 'create our own reality', if you like. One of my favourite movies is "Life is Beautiful", about a father who is sent to a concentration camp with his son during the war. The father pretends to his son that they are in a 'reality game' and interprets everything that happens through the lenses of this game. This changes the entire experience for this boy; instead of being afraid he is excited; instead of being cautious he is adventurous.

This reflects for me an incredibly powerful scripture that I absolutely love - **Romans 12:2** "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will." I desire so much, as I am sure all of us do, to experience God's good, pleasing and perfect will. Sometimes life doesn't feel good, pleasing or perfect though, especially if I am sleep deprived 😊 The amazing thing is that God gives us a solution for change – it is changing our mind. Like the Dad in the movie, we can change how we feel about our reality by changing how we think about our reality. We do this by making our mind 'new'. I saw this scripture lived out recently in a conversation with a Dad who has a baby and a young child. He shared how he was feeling irritated and frustrated at certain times in trying to cope with this challenging life stage. Then he decided he didn't want to regret anything about this stage, challenging as it can be; instead he really wanted to enjoy

it. He decided that with each situation he would look for what he could be grateful for. Guess what? He is now really enjoying each day in this life phase, with the challenges that come with it. His feelings are different because he has renewed his mind to become grateful. He is experiencing so much more of God's good, pleasing and perfect will living in the spiritual reality he has created instead of being victim to the physical reality he is in. I had a thought that I wished I had done that more when I was in that life phase, but it was a great reminder that I can apply that to whichever life phase and situation I am in: "give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" **1 Thess 5:18**

*Jane Moors*

with God

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# You need to find your own oxygen mask first

God truly has blessed me with an amazing husband and 2 beautiful children. My son is a gentle spirited, deep thinker and introvert and happy to go along with the crowd. My daughter is a kind hearted, generous spirited little girl who loves life and cannot bear to waste a minute, she knows exactly what she wants. My husband is a phlegmatic who is able to set boundaries.

I was a mum who never got the natural mum's instinct as soon as my first born arrived. I was easily rattled, very insecure and second guessed myself at every turn. (I speak in past tense as I have learnt so much about being a mum)

And now if they sold bumper stickers that said "You can't scare me, I have toddlers" I may have been tempted to buy one 😊

Having a toddler can be overwhelming. Add another child to the mix with a strong will and you have a phase of life that can be so very overwhelming where you may relate to David where he says in:

## **Psalm 69:1**

Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.  
You can write your own story line, no matter what your story line is, tell it to any toddler mum and you will have instant understanding.  
God is just wonderful he really does also understand.  
This scriptures speaks to me about just how God understands us.

## **Jeremiah 31:25 -26 (MSG)**

I'll refresh tired bodies;  
I'll restore tired souls.  
Just then I woke up and looked around-what a pleasant and satisfying sleep.  
Doesn't that just sound comforting?  
God does refresh us.

It is very important as mum's, we learn to put on our own oxygen masks first, then we can really take care of our families.

What does that mean for you?

Gym time?

Listening to music that doesn't include Barney or Winnie the Pooh?

Coffee time with your husband?

Coffee time with friend?

A lie in on a Saturday morning and going through Pinterest?

What ever it is, pray about it then chat with your husband and see how you can put on your oxygen mask.

Continue to pray that when you do take the time that you fight any feelings of guilt.

With God you will find the JOY and purpose and meaning in the chaos.

You hear people saying, it will be ok in 5 years time. It really will be.

And where eventually you can buy a bumper sticker that says " I survived the toddler year's and loved it, you can't scare me"

*Candice Roman*

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# God arms you with strength

## **Psalms 16:5-11**

"Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. 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, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. 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."

- How can you, as a new mom, keep your eyes always on the Lord?
- God fills us with joy in his presence. Spending time with God is not for him but rather for you.
- How can you, in shorter bursts of time, connect with God?

## **Psalms 18:30-36**

"As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord's word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him. For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he causes me to stand on the heights. He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You make your saving help my shield, and your right hand sustains me; your help has made me great. You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way."

- God arms you with strength and keeps you secure, lean on Him.
- God trains us for battle (and to face new and daunting situations)
- How can you allow God to train you when you are adjusting to a new situation and exhausted?
- How can you make the most of more, shorter times in the word?

Use feeding times to pray, read one scripture, meditate or sing.

# Grateful Praise

## Psalm 100

A psalm. For giving grateful praise.

1 Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

2 Worship the Lord with gladness;  
come before him with joyful songs.

3 Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving

and his courts with praise;

give thanks to him and praise his name.

5 For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;  
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

I love this psalm. Though there were many times during those early baby months when I felt beyond tired, there were also many times when I looked at my boy and I just wanted to shout for joy to God for him.

Verse 2 of this psalm reminded me that I could come before God with joyful songs... so I chose a song inspired by this psalm that I would sing to God every morning. I would stand at my bedroom window holding my baby and sing to God:

'I will enter his gates with thanksgiving in my heart,

I will enter his courts with praise,

I will say this is the day that the Lord has made,

I will rejoice for he has made me glad.

He has made me glad, he has made me glad,

I will rejoice for he has made me glad,

He has made me glad, I will rejoice for he has made me glad'

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Admittedly there were some days when this was my one connection time with God (we all have those rough days). Whenever I sang this song, I felt my spirits rise in spite of how spent I felt physically and emotionally, and I felt God's presence.

How can you use songs or singing or music as part of your time with God?  
Do you have a favourite song, or a special song that can help you connect with Him?

*Chantelle Solomon*



# Rejoice always

Phil 4:4-6

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” and He will give you the peace that transcends all understanding.

Rejoice **always**? Don't be anxious about **anything**????? **REALLY** !?

This scripture has been the most challenging and MOST helpful to me before motherhood and mostly as a Mom.

I have felt the most anxious when there is pressure to perform and when my children are compared with others. **70% of all women feel inadequate!** Why is that? As a woman our insecurities can be damaging and lead to very bad behaviour. Even if we don't compare our babies and children to others, our family, friends and even some arb stranger will.

## This thought helps me ...

Some baby out there will go on solids before yours, start walking before yours, say his 1st word before yours, potty train before yours, swim, sleep though and say 'mamma' before yours. Some other mom out there will fit into her old jeans before you ... It's not fair but it is **OK!**

- Praying will give you **patience** with yourself and your baby.
- Petition (writing thoughts down) will help you look through your feelings and **work through them.**
- Giving thanks to God will give you **perspective.**
- Presenting your requests to God will take the **pressure off of yourself** as you hand it to God.

Find a reason to Rejoice always and don't be anxious about anything. 😊 God will give you his peace that transcends all understanding.

Leesa van Niekerk

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# My Struggle Is NOT Unique

As a mother of young children, I STRUGGLED!!!!

God had given me these remarkable creatures, perfectly formed, to love and to nurture. Yet some days I didn't want to!!

I love my children. I simply found mothering to be the most difficult thing I have ever done!!!!

## 1 Cor 10:13

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man..."

Satan wants us to feel like no one understands, that we are completely alone and that our situation or child is completely unique.

As soon as I believe this lie, I feel sorry for myself, withdraw and grumble towards God that He has given me too much to bear.

Although I need help, I push everyone away, including God.

## 1 Cor 10:13

".. God is FAITHFUL. He will NOT let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. ... when you are tempted He will also provide a way out..."

This is such a wonderful promise.

What are the ways out that God provides for you to stand up?

I am so grateful for so many moms in the Kingdom that has helped me and continues to help me today.

*Lize Vos*

# Life in this world but not of this world

Transition necessitates a change in identity. And when you are taking care of children and a household, there isn't always much time to figure it out!

Add to that all the challenges we face as mothers in today's society . There are so many choices . It can be overwhelming to sort through all the options and feel confident in our decisions. It can leave us feeling frustrated and frazzled.

## 1 John 17:14-17

Jesus was a realist. On this earth we will always be "in the world" But that doesn't mean we have to buy into it's values.

## 2 Pet 1:3-4

God has given us "everything we need for life and godliness." We can participate in the divine nature and "escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

Has the values and opinion of the world become more important to you?

Has your outward appearance, or the outward appearance of your children or family become more important than your inward relationship with God?

What will help you to continue to look at yourself and your family from God's perspective instead of from the worlds point of view?

*Lize Vos*

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## Fear and worry

**FEAR:** An unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain, or harm.

**WORRY:** feel or cause to feel anxious or troubled about actual or potential problems.

Young moms experience a lot of fear/worry. Not just first time moms, any mom with a baby less than three months. They look so fragile. Thoughts that crossed my mind was:

- Will I hear my baby when he cries?
- Will he be too hot or too cold in these clothes?
- Is he really hungry (Am I over feeding him?)
- Did he drink enough, I did not time him?
- Why does he feel so hot, is it a fever?
- What if I put him on his back and he vomit during the night?
- What is this rash?
- Is the diarrhoea rota virus? Must I take him to the hospital?

And then, you get medically trained moms like myself and think we are okay? We are not! The fear of what if ... is with us too. There are day's that you feel in control and not worried, but there is day's or situations that make you feel anxious and worried. Being very tired due to the lack of sleep and constant care for the new baby's needs, lowers our ability to fight our thoughts and fears.

### **What really helped me during this time was the following scripture:**

Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and grey hairs I am he who sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you. I will sustain you and I will rescue you. **Isa 46:3-4**

This scripture really comforted me. I realised that God sustained this baby since it was conceived. God is the one who can protect it. Sometimes I just had to hold on to it and pray through it if I really worried about things.

"He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young." **Is 40:11**

Write **Is 46:3-4** on a paper and put it above the cot. Do not forget that only God can sustain us and put your baby in his hands. It also helps to speak to older moms about your fear/worry by a quick sms or phone call. Like **1 Cor 10:13** says: "temptation(fear/worry) is common to man". It helps to know someone can relate to you and you are not alone/someone has else felt it too.

*Nellie Nel*

with God

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## God's strength and not mine

Anxiety was and still is a struggle for me. The fear of not knowing how to handle situations or not having sufficient experience in an area tends to make me feel inadequate. This constantly needs me to be on my knees to set my focus on God's strength and not mine.

Without God I will feel inadequate because there will always be other people with more knowledge, experience and expertise. The only thing I need to hold onto is God's truth as it will provide wisdom and strength.

**Psalm 62:1-8**

**Psalm 63:1**

**Psalm 27:1**

**1 Peter 5 :6-7**

When I feel pressure how quickly do I pray? Do I really believe God is my strength?

When I am strong and focused on God I find it easier to accept that I do not have to have any answers.

*Nomfesane Taliwe*

## Challenges build character

For the greater part of my life up until my early 20's I lived a fairly healthy life without many health problems. In my mid 20's after a few years of marriage and as soon as I fell pregnant I experienced some challenges that left a few scars (physically, mentally and emotionally). I am only grateful that these health challenges did not leave any Spiritual scars but rather taught me some very important things about God.

**2 Peter 1 :5-8**

**James 5:11**

Understand that perseverance can only be learnt while going through trials not when life is smooth sailing.

As a young Mom you will have a lot of good times but some difficulties too. God will carry you...hold on

*Nomfesane Taliwe*

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# Only One Thing

When I think about my life as a mom of 2 toddlers, amongst the many joys, an overwhelming feeling of tiredness are certainly towards the top of the list. I have accepted the fact that I will, for a long time, not be refreshed with undisturbed sleep and I will need to find my rest and strength elsewhere. My only other option, is God.

## Is 40:28-31

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

God knows I am tired and He wants to help me. By placing my hope in Him, I enable Him to strengthen me. Feeling tired is the reason why I should get out of bed and spend time with God. I need His strength so much more. I know myself: When I am tired, I get impatient, easily overwhelmed, emotional and a whole lot more. 15 Minutes extra with God = an hour's worth of sleep.

## Luke 10:38 - 42 (NIV)

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

The dishes, the beds and the dirty floor can wait. In 10 years, they won't matter. What would make the biggest difference both in my life, and my children's lives, is me being close to God. This is a season in my life which will pass (too soon). Indeed,



only one thing is needed.

### **FURTHER READING:**

#### **Matt 6:6 (MSG)**

"Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense His grace. Even if I don't know what to say, I can just be with God. Be still, and let the Holy Spirit intercede for me. Praying while walking with an almost-asleep-baby in my arms is better than not praying at all.

#### **Matt 11:28 - 29**

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

#### **Jeremiah 31:25 (MSG)**

I'll refresh tired bodies; I'll restore tired souls.

#### **Ps 119:114 (MSG)**

You're my place of quiet retreat;  
I wait for your Word to renew me.

*Stema Müller*

with God

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## Music soothes the soul

**Zephaniah 3:17** New Living Translation (NLT)

“For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.”

As a young Christian, I came across this scripture about how God takes great delight over me and rejoices over me with singing. I treasured this scripture and often when I felt scared or confused; I would read it and imagine God singing over me as a mother sings to her baby.

Experts say that a mother’s voice is very soothing for a distressed baby as for months in the womb; the baby constantly hears the mother’s voice. The mother’s voice reminds the baby that she is there to love them, feed them and keep them secure.

As a young mom, there were times I would try make plans for the day but my baby would wake up crying or would refuse to sleep. I was often alone at these times and although I could just make a phone call for help or encouragement, it felt like too much of an effort. At these times I would remember this scripture and I would just start singing to my baby. Some songs were about God giving me strength to continue or other times it would be children’s songs I had learnt teaching in Kids zone. These songs would not only soothe the baby but my soul too. Some days my times with God were just me singing to him with my baby. Even though my children are a little older now, they still ask me to sing to them when they cannot fall asleep or are having scary dreams.

Try singing to your baby daily even if you think you do not have an amazing voice. To your baby, you are the best singer ever. There are numerous music CDs you can try if you just do not know the words to songs. But most of all remember that God is with you always and delights (takes pleasure in, appreciates, enjoys) in you.

*Maura Lappeman*

## Being present with your baby

Many people say to young mothers that they should cherish the time with their baby as they grow up so fast. Others say that it gets easier so just hang in there. Now having recently come out of the baby phase I realize that babies do grow up very fast and that there are times that you do need to just hang in there and know that this too shall pass.

God is the ultimate parent. I love psalm 8:3-4 that talks about how God has created all things from the most massive universe to the tiny DNA molecule. He is all powerful, all mighty, all genius; but the psalmist goes on to say that he still takes time to think about us mere humans.

### **Psalm 8:3-4, New International Version (NIV)**

When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,  
what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?

Mindful means thoughtful and attentive. Being present in the moment by taking in what is going around you. Not trying to think about what is going to happen next or what people around you have or have not done. Taking time to just experience your baby right now.

I often use the acronym STOP when I get to busy or feel overwhelmed:

- S Stop and smile
- T Take a deep breathe
- O Observe what is going on around you without judgment. Don't judge your actions. Just think about being a mom and the miracle that God has given you this little person to think about and love as he has done with us.
- P Proceed with what you were doing

with God

God believes that you can be a mother. Take the time to look at your baby and marvel at God's miracle. Take notes about your baby. Write letters to God about your baby. I started a book about my children and the funny things they do. I started it with a prayer to God about how much I love them and want to cherish them. It is next to my bed so when they are cute or say funny things, I quickly jot in it. Often my children will come and ask me to read it to them (including the prayer to God). They love that I think about them and treasure them.

*Maura Lappeman*

# My strength comes from God who is my Strength

I was not a young mom when I became a disciple as my children were 7 and 9 years old. I did however have a really tough time when I went through some health challenges towards the end of the 1990's.

I went through a period in my life, a period that lasted for many years where I felt so weak that I struggled to have any type of Quiet Time (QT) at all, let alone get up and take the kids to school. I suffered from a heart condition that took many years to diagnose, but it left me without any energy to even cope with the simplest of tasks. I know that as a young mom, the end of each day (does it ever end?) can feel like this, without strength to even want to do the simplest of tasks, compounded by waking up several times each night and then facing the new day, having to do it all again.

When I was at the end of my tether (and it's quite amazing what we can do with that last bit), the best I could do was to memorise and to hold on to some key verses, e.g.

## **GOD IS MY STRENGTH (NOT ME)**

### **Psalm 118:14**

The Lord is my strength and my song;  
he has become my salvation.

### **Psalm 46:1**

God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.

### **Psalm 81:1**

Sing aloud to God our strength;  
shout for joy to the God of Jacob!

### **Psalm 28:8**

The Lord is the strength of his people;  
he is the saving refuge of his anointed.

with God

**Psalm 59:9**

O my Strength, I will watch for you,  
for you, O God, are my fortress.

**HE GIVES ME THE STRENGTH I NEED**

**Isaiah 40:29**

He gives power to the faint,  
and to him who has no might he increases strength.

**Ephesians 6:10**

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

**Psalm 29:11**

May the Lord give strength to his people!  
May the Lord bless his people with peace!

**Psa lm 18:31**

For you equipped me with strength for the battle;  
you made those who rise against me sink under me.

**Phi lippians 4:13**

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

When those days came and I felt like I was fighting a losing battle, against my personal health enemies, I focused on the Strength that I could get from God. I would talk myself through the Scriptures e.g. remembering that God is my Strength and my Rock and that He would carry me and I would remind God of His promises and to ask Him to get me through each day. I had to remind myself that God would give me the strength that I would need every day, that I could do all things through Him.

*Joan Jarchow*

# Rejoicing

I spent many days fighting my health, having so much pain or getting frustrated with my situation, wondering how I was going to get my girls to school. I was just coping with the basics, getting up, eating, existing and then going back to bed. I am saying this because it reminds me of young moms who feel like their whole existence revolves around caring for their young ones and changing out of your pj's or getting the dishes washed is a bonus, let alone cleaning the house and getting the washing done.

I remember that I kept thinking that I had to stop spending all my energy fighting against my situation. I finally settled in a place where I could say with confidence that this is where God wants me to be right now. I learned to work with where I was at and taking it to a point where I could find actual joy in my circumstances. I had to move the issues aside and find the blessings that were always there in front of me.

Right now there are many blessings in front of you, except they are being obscured by where you are currently at. These are the Scriptures that helped me:

## **Phi 4:4**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

## **1 The 5:16**

Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

I would think about what it could mean to rejoice in the Lord always. How could I bring Him glory in what I was going through or doing. The last verse is particularly insightful as it gives us two clues on how to stay in this state of continually rejoicing. Paul teaches us that we should "pray continually" and "give thanks in all circumstances".

Another helpful way of focusing on rejoicing is to sing songs that had a theme of rejoicing in them, e.g.

## **To God be the Glory**

### **Verse 1**

To God be the glory great things He has done  
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son  
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin  
And opened the life gate that all may go in

### **Chorus**

Praise the Lord praise the Lord  
Let the earth hear His voice  
Praise the Lord praise the Lord  
Let the people rejoice  
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son  
And give Him the glory great things He has done

### **Verse 2**

O perfect redemption the purchase of blood  
To every believer the promise of God  
The vilest offender who truly believes  
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives

### **Verse 3**

Great things He has taught us  
Great things He has done  
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son  
But purer and higher and greater will be  
Our wonder our transport when Jesus we see

Or "Rejoice in the Law of the Lord",  
Or "I hear God singing to me".

*Joan Jarchow*



## Soothing baby and me

I went through a very tough time when I had my first daughter from infidelity to a house burglary by 8 men while we were in the house.

I could not believe how an incredible calmness and serenity came over me over that time – it was God.

In hindsight, it strikes me as incredible how the will to survive and nurture completely ruled over taking care of myself. I was desperate for consistent love, validation (never mind that I was freaked out by my weird tummy after giving birth!), words of comfort and above all, safety.

When I had stopped breast feeding, life came back to normal (a little) and the PTS started (post-traumatic stress). All the stuff I delayed myself from dealing with I had to tackle head on! You will never guess what happened to give perspective in my life. My sister in law who was pregnant at the same time gave birth to a beautiful normal baby boy about 2 months after I gave birth and on day 2, he suffered lung trauma and was diagnosed as severely spastic.

I know, you feel it too right? What would you do? The days I had no sleep, the days I resented my husband for not getting up, the days I wanted to scream at my baby for just crying continually (and did), I remembered James. I had immediate perspective. I could pull myself together and fast. I remembered holding a healthy, beautiful baby girl and repeating the words to her: "I am here, I am always here, I love you, I will never leave you" (you have to say it with a smile on your face so that it has the same confident ring – try it with a sad face...)

This mantra soothed my soul more than hers for sure. Yes, they are familiar words – the words of Jesus. Repetition helped me. It starts to sink in slowly, it resonated with me and it sank in for sure. It helped. Loads.

Sometimes we need perspective. I know I did.  
Another verse that helped me and still is a mantra today:

with God

**Ephesians 3:20**

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever! Amen.

*Andrea van Niekerk*

# Opportunity

**1 Tim 2:15** '... woman will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith love and holiness with propriety'

For a long time I did not get this at all and to be quite honest, I did not like the sound of it. It sounded unpleasant and as unfair as being the main one burdened with the responsibility of stinking dirty nappies, or vomit or endless nights of little or no sleep – and not exactly getting a reward for it.

But there is a different perspective that helped me change my heart about the seemingly 'unfair' part of being a mom: Jesus came to set the ultimate example.

**Matt 11:28-30** "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

**Matt 20:26-28** - "... whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Paul also stresses the same thing in **Phil 2:5-8**.

As moms God has blessed us with a great opportunity to become more like Christ - it simply comes with the job description of mom. As we embrace being a servant, choosing humility, we will be saved from our selfish sinful self more every day. What an unfair advantage we have!

**Phil 1:6** '... he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.'

Sarien Steyn

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# Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

## Psalm 139:13-16

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 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."

- This is the perfect Psalm to read when you just had a baby because it reminds us that God created us. If you can, look at your baby. Reread verses 14 -16. Look at how perfectly your baby has been made. Look at the detail on their hands, their eyes, and their mouth. God made your baby perfectly. He knit him together in your womb.
- Suggestion: Use this Psalm to pray to God today, thanking him for your newborn miracle, who is fearfully and wonderfully made.
- Your baby is a miracle and God has given him/her to you.

# Divine Comfort

Isa 66:13

“As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.”

Meditate on how God has comforted you at different times during your life.

As you comfort your baby.... You may hold, rock baby in your arms, sing, pray for, hug, squish, kiss, comfort. Keep him/her warm and fed etc... Know that God has the same heart for you as you have for your baby.

Find comfort in that.

with God

# God cares for you

1 Peter 5:7

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

## How do we cast our anxieties on him???

1. Know and trust that God cares for you.
2. Pray through all your anxious thoughts and feelings.
3. Speak to a spiritual friend about your anxious thoughts and fears. Even if you feel that your fears are silly.
4. Pray with your husband.

# He gently leads those that have young

Isaiah 40:11

“He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young”

- You have a special place in God’s heart during this time. He is gently leading you. You are his treasured possession.
- Marvel at God’s heart for mothers. He wants to gently lead us. He knows it’s a difficult and vulnerable time.
- As a new mother you may feel stretched in all areas: emotionally due to hormonal changes, new responsibilities etc; physically due to lack of sleep, trauma of birth, breastfeeding etc, spiritually due to less contact with the body of Christ, influence of feelings, being consumed by new responsibilities and challenges, in marriage and other relationships due to less time available, less opportunity to confess sin and be open about feelings.
- Allow God to gently lead you through this time. Be **Merciful and patient** with yourself and your baby or even your older child.

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# *A Gift from God*

**Psalm 127:3**

“Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him”

If you have ever received a reward for something - You know it feels good!

God has rewarded you with your new baby! ENJOY it.

Well done!



# Godly Plans

Jer 29:11

“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’.”

- God has plans for each of us, which have been thought through, designed with a specific goal in mind, and which are meant to benefit everyone involved. Doesn't it make you feel so loved by God?
- In the same way, our children need to have the assurance that we'll think through things, wrestle with important decisions that need to be made and implemented. Knowing that we are considerate to them and are thoughtful parents, gives them a sense of being valued and cherished. When they're older, those positive feelings and thoughts will stay a part of who they are and how they'll view God and the world around them.
- Life may not live up to our expectations. The cards that are dealt us might not be the ones that we wanted. Be secure in what God has given you. There is a plan to prosper you and not to harm you. To give you a hope and a future.

with God

# Accept the season

Ecc 3:1

“there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.”

This is your season to be a young mom. Then it will be the toddler season, pre-school, primary school and too soon the teen season!

Learn everything you can through each season and grow. Just as you think you have got it down it changes.

You will find that your responsibilities will be too much for your level of spirituality .  
You need to keep growing.  
Enjoy each season!

# God Rejoices over You with Singing

**Zeph 3:17**

“The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save, He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing”

- God is the absolute perfect parent. He sings to us!
- Meditate on his love for you and the amazing, miraculous gift he’s given you.
- Try singling to your baby.
- Sing to God. Listen to spiritual music if you can.

with God



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