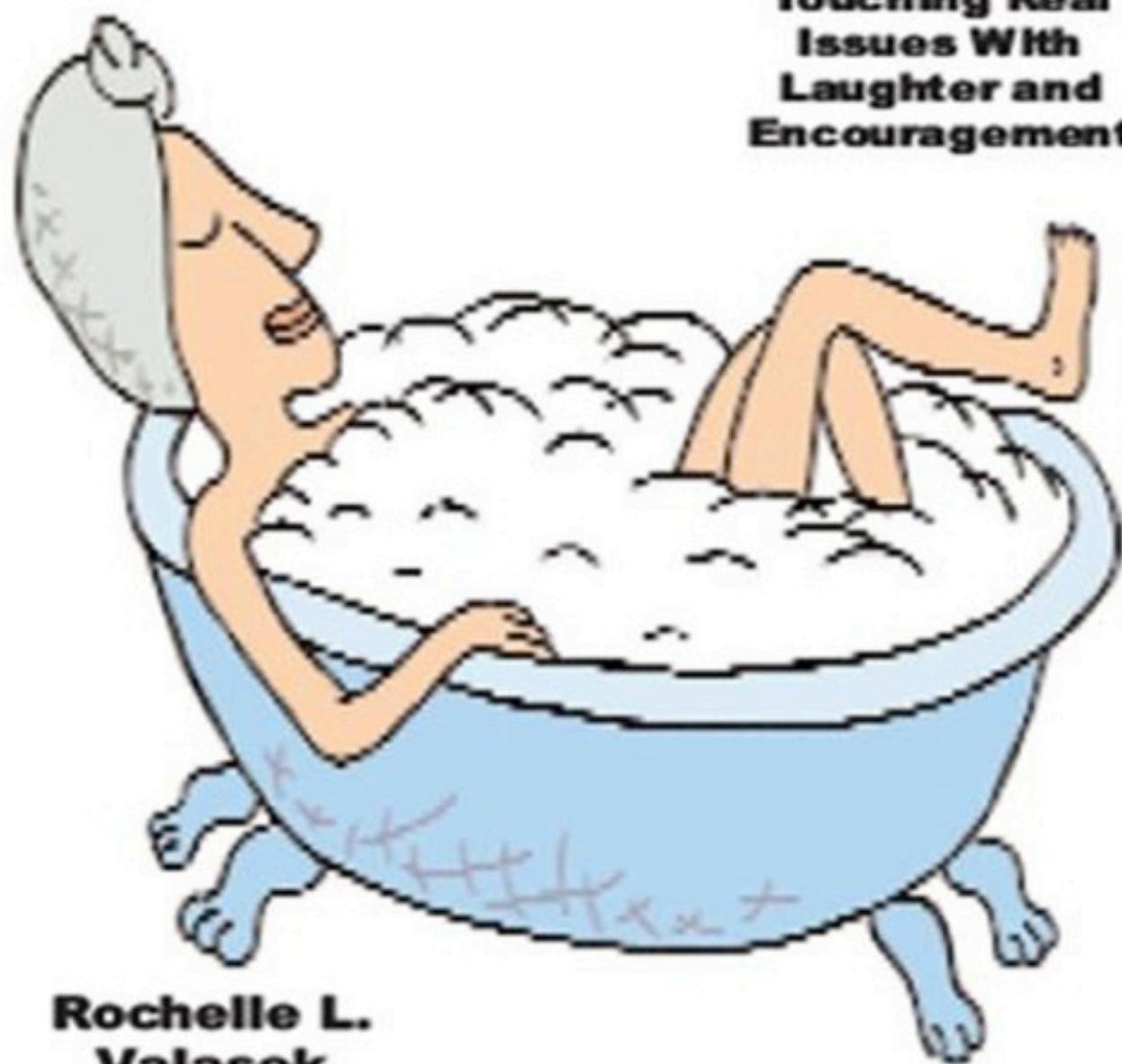


Frazzled Moms' Devotions to Go

**Touching Real
Issues With
Laughter and
Encouragement**



**Rochelle L.
Valasek**

Moms' Devotions to Go Series

Frazzled Moms' Devotions to Go

Touching Real Issues With Laughter and
Encouragement

Rochelle L Valasek

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This book is dedicated to:

My Momma

Betty J. Lauster

We may have had a rocky relationship for a season of our life, but I recognize that you, mother, did the best you could with God's graces and mercy. As your adult-daughter, I have acknowledged the difficulties and challenges of a mother myself. I thank God everyday for giving us another chance to not only be a loving mother and daughter duo but to be best friends.

Mom, I am so proud to be your daughter.

Dear Sisters,

Mothers come in all shapes, sizes, colors, ages and walks of life. But there are two things we mothers have in common. We live in the same world filled with chaos and we all were woven from the same Creator. This is something we all should be grateful for. Not only can we all relate on different levels of chaos and help each other out, but we all can form a relationship on the same foundation of Jesus Christ.

Without my Heavenly Father and my friends and family, I have no clue where I'd be - probably in an asylum for the insane, I guess. Today, society puts so many demands on a mother. Having so many expectations from the world's view of a mother sometimes blurs the real picture of what a mother actually should be striving to do. This is why we end up being Frazzled Moms. Let's face it, just trying to keep the Cheerios from drying on the table, the children from chasing the family pet around the house and keeping the laundry from taking over the upstairs is enough to put us in a tizzy.

I took thirty of my life's stories, pondering moments, favorite Scriptures and lessons, and shared them with you in this devotional. Some of them may let you see a side of motherhood you have not yet visited and some may have you shaking your head in agreement. These devotionals are meant for you to realize that you are not alone. I also wanted to share with you some of my prayers and a few helpful activities that I lovingly call Spirit Builders.

I hope that you find yourself, laughter, peace and encouragement throughout these pages. Most of all, I pray that you find the love of God.

Remember, we all fall down the same. The difference between Believers and the non-believers is how we get back up.

May you be blessed with these words you are about to read.

Love in Him,

Rochelle L Valasek

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Just Say No!

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Matthew 11:25-30

Multitasking is a women's ability that I love to brag about. Though sometimes I believe we tend to go overboard. Naturally, we take on the load of being a mother, wife, housekeeper, and chef. Then we bring in the extras: soccer mom, den mother, Sunday school teacher, and women's ministry-finding ourselves exhausted and stressed.

Sound like anyone you know?

I teach organization and time management and pride myself in having these tools however there was a time that I was out of control - I didn't know how to say "no." Not only was I a wife and mommy of two small boys but I also was going back to school, running my own business, teaching Mission Friends and singing in the choir. It seemed that since others saw (or thought they saw) me take all my hats and juggle them without tripping over my own feet that I was able to throw another hat into the mix.

Being the good Christian woman I thought I was, I would effortlessly say, "Of course. No problem." and be on my busy way to the next project. This, I found out, only lasts for so long. Sooner or later you trip and all the hats tumble down.

One busy Saturday I got a call from the Preschool Director saying she needed someone to fill in for an ailing Sunday School teacher. It so happened that I was already helping with the New Members Seminar and was in choir that morning. I had to say no.

I noticed that it felt good to say no- like a ten-ton brick fell off my shoulders. After I hung up I said to the Lord, “Why can’t I say “no” more often? That felt great!”

I could almost feel God put His hand on my shoulder and say, “You can.” He brought thoughts of my different commitments and callings showing me that some bring joy and some bring angst. I needed to carry out what brings Him edification and delight. I should pursue what He CALLS me to do.

From then on I evaluated the projects available to me and placed them at God’s feet. He gave me rest when I needed. I had energy for the ministries He called me to do and I could say ‘no’ to the ones He didn’t.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, keep my heart and ears open for Your whispers. Teach me to know the difference between a calling and volunteering. Most of all, may I edify and glorify you in all that I do, Lord. Amen

Spirit Builder

Sit down and make a list of all the projects you “volunteer” for. Pray about them. Pray for wisdom. Ask Him to show you what it is that He is CALLING you to do. A hint for deciding what ministries are your calling versus what you are volunteering is that when you find yourself exhausted and not thrilled to be doing a particular service then most likely you are only being a volunteer. A calling frequently has you feeling energized and you are tickled to be doing it.

Be brave and say, ‘no’. Do only what God calls you to do.

Temptation's Fall

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell.

Psalm 27:1-2

Before my husband and I got married we promised that I would not work when we had children. It was important to us and we believed that God called us to this choice.

My husband, Tony, unfortunately lost his job when our first child was 10 months old. Not only is this hard on a family in normal circumstances, but we had medical bills coming from all directions due to my health issues. Fortunately, God had it all planned out. Tony's sister had come to stay with us for a while and was working at a local restaurant. This gave me the ability to work part time and have someone in the family to watch over my son. It was amazing watching His plan unfold.

My sister-in-law and my son and I would go out to lunch frequently to the restaurant where she worked. They ended up offering me a job! This was perfect. We could get them to schedule us opposite shifts and one of us would always be there for my baby.

Though I missed my boy's first steps, everything was working like clockwork and food was on the table. Unfortunately, this upset the Enemy. He started throwing things at me left and right.

I hate to admit it but I was probably one of the older employees. I was pretty much the age of the managers. The others were the age of college students.

After everyone became comfortable with me they started showing their true colors. I was being approached with sexual innuendo, offered drugs, and more. You would think that it's easy to stay away from these types of temptations, but when you are working with people in close quarters, it's hard

I felt the most uncomfortable with the sexual innuendos. However, there were times it made me feel special. My husband and I were going through a lot of stress. We hardly saw each other let alone fill each other's love tank. Of course it felt good to get a few compliments. And Satan knew this. I could have easily fallen for his lies and deceit if it weren't for God protecting me from the Enemy and his puppets. I had the strength and the love of God to stand on.

With much prayer, it wasn't but a few months I had to endure this, God blessed my husband with another job that let me go back home and be a mommy.

Prayer: Lord, protect me from the Enemy's grasp. Let me see circumstances for what they are. Give me strength and endurance for what is placed in my path that is not of YOU. Amen

Spirit Builder

Find a place that you can make your Prayer Closet. It can be a true walk-in closet or just a chair in the corner of a sunroom. This is a place where you can go away from everyone and the world. You will want to have a Bible to read and meditate with the Lord, and a journal to write down prayers or thoughts God passes on to you.

Go to your Prayer Closet once a day, if possible, and go to the Lord with your stresses and concerns. Ask Him for peace and make sure to thank Him for what He is about to do.

Mommy's Time Out

For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. Psalm 27:5

My husband had to go out of town for a week for a business convention in Texas. We had only been living in Warren, PA for a few months, which was also two hours away from both of our families. Our son, Anthony, was five years old and Noah was one. I hadn't made many friends yet. I only talked to a few ladies that were in my water-aerobics class. I couldn't go home to my family; Anthony was in kindergarten.

At first it wasn't too bad; I tried to keep up our regular routine. Get the boys up, feed them breakfast, take Anthony to school and Noah and I would go to the YMCA for my workout. After the workout and shower, I would take Noah home with me to clean up the house and then pick up Anthony and have the rest of the day to do whatever fancied us.

Well, that got old.

I didn't realize how many aggravations my husband, Tony, took off of me when he came home from work. As soon as Daddy would come through that door the boys would go to him, and Mommy was out of the picture, leaving me to do the things that I couldn't normally do with the kids around, like running my business at home, (phone calls, scheduling, paperwork, etc.), cleaning that involved hazardous chemicals, cooking, anything that would involve most of my attention.

So as the days went by and the hours grew into evening, the three of us would get a bit stressed out. The boys would pick at each other and I was losing all threads of patience with my children.

"Momma, he won't stop following me!" My eldest, Anthony would say.

“Noah, leave your brother alone, honey.”

Anthony would come running into the kitchen, “Mom, tell Noah to stop touching me!”

“Honey, he is only a little baby, he just loves you.” I replied with the best loving mother voice I could muster.

“But MOMMA! I need my space!”

“Sweetheart, you’re five years old, how much space do you need?” I said between my teeth with a fixed smile.

Anthony went back to his room and shut the door, a no-no at our house. I went back the hall to open his door when I heard Noah crying.

“Now what?” I exclaimed to nobody in particular.

I was trying to follow the sound of the crying when Anthony comes out and asks what is going on. I didn’t answer because I was in tuned to Noah’s cry.

When I found Noah, he was sitting by the gate of the steps crying big crocodile tears. He was holding his hand and rocking back and forth. I took his small hand and saw that he had pinched it. It wasn’t bad but it obviously scared Noah more than hurt him.

“What’s he crying for? It’s not that bad, Mom.” Anthony was always good at being brave until it was his own blood.

“Anthony, he’s just a little guy, it scared him as much as it hurt him.” I was walking back the hall to get the Boo- Boo Bunny in the freezer with Noah on my hip. The closer I got to the kitchen the more I could smell

something odd. I turned around the corner and there from the skillet that used to have a grilled cheese sandwich was a deformed black square with a large trail of smoke going up into a great black cloud hovering the ceiling.

“Oh my!” I cried and sat Noah down on the kitchen island. I quickly turned off the stove and threw the skillet and charcoaled cheese sandwich into the sink.

“Good Grief!” I said, once again, to no one in particular. I picked Noah back up and went to the freezer to get out the Boo-Boo Bunny and just as soon as I turned around the fire alarm decided to go off.

I hurried and put Noah down on the floor and grabbed the kitchen towel and start waving it under the fire alarm on the wall. I was about to cry. I thought I was going to absolutely lose myself. I’m not sure if it was the loud fire alarm or the kids feeling my stress but they began to cry and I chimed in with them.

“That is it! Mommy needs a time out!” I took Noah and put him in his crib, had Anthony go to his room and I went to my room.

I knew that if I didn’t get away from everything and go to my Heavenly Father, I would turn into something that wasn’t in character of a godly mother. I laid on my bed and cried to the Lord. I felt like I needed to be put up on the shelf to cool.

After crying and telling God everything I felt and asking Him for forgiveness afterward, I felt at peace. God’s grace and understanding is sufficient and calming. He keeps trouble at bay.

Not only did putting Mommy in time out save my children’s lives, (just kidding) it showed the boys that there are times when I feel like trouble is brewing and I may become someone that doesn’t glorify God. We need to stop, realize there is a problem and go to Him. Receive peace from our Holy Father.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me the courage to see myself as I am. Give me the strength to admit there is trouble stirring and the need to be rescued by You. You provide peace like no other and I praise You for that.

Amen

Spirit Builder

Take an hour and spend it with God and yourself. Take a long hot bath. Put some fragrant candles in the bathroom and play a relaxing instrumental on your CD player. Make sure you put bath salts or essential oils in your bath. Maybe even some rose pedals. Lavender is a known fragrance that calms you. Make sure you do this at least once a week. Just lay back and meditate on a Scripture that gives you peace. Listen to the soft music that God created and listen for God's whisper.

The Walking Mommy

The LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your soul in drought. And strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. Isaiah 58:11

Both my sons were colic babies but my first son had it the worst. I remember walking around the house all night with my crying baby in my arms. My husband was on 3rd shift at the time. That didn't help matters. He helped on the weekends but during the week I had no relief or encouragement. I became a very tired momma with a crying colicky baby.

After weeks of making a path in the carpet throughout the house, I looked like a walking zombie. As each night passed I became more exhausted. I felt as if I was on automatic pilot. I had no energy, no zest and couldn't even muster a prayer. I grew weary each day with the thoughts that I may get to the point of not only being worthless to my family but losing the quality of the relationship I had with my Heavenly Father.

It became quite clear that I was at my physical and emotional limit when I found milk in the cupboard and the cereal box in the refrigerator. I missed doctor appointments and forgot birthdays. And when I would become aware of these things, I would become a puddle on the floor and just cry my eyes out. The only thing I could do was say, "Help me, Lord! I don't think I can take anymore, I'm going crazy!" That is all I could think. I couldn't recapture Scriptures or any other way to beseech God for His peace. I felt that God was becoming distant - as if I couldn't feel His presence as I had before.

I found myself opening the Bible with no direction, just a yearning to fight my way back to His holy lap. Then I recalled a sermon that my pastor shared with us. He explained that there would be times that you feel the need to read the Bible but you don't know which verse. These are the times when you just pray for Him to speak to your heart. Ask Him to direct you to whatever you need to know or hear. I took that advice and, with Bible in

hand, I prayed that God would take me to where He wanted me to be in His Word. I then opened the Bible randomly and I was drawn instantly to the Isaiah 58:11.

After finding this eye-opening verse, I realized that because of the blessing God gave me in the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, He wants me to flourish. Even when I'm down to my lowest of lows, the Holy Spirit will speak on my behalf and seek the guidance I need from God to find my way to His will.

When my heart accepted this message, I found myself praising Him in the middle of the night as I walked my screaming baby along the beaten path of the house's carpet. I used that time to pray over my child and his colic. I would pray for energy for the next day. And as I would pray I could feel my Heavenly Father holding me again, picking me up onto His lap, giving me comfort and peace.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, even though I am a mother, You still love and care for me as Your child. Please continue to hold me on Your lap and keep me close. Give me the peace that only You can provide. Keep my ears open and my heart prepared to hear and understand Your Word and Your Guidance. I ask this in Your Son's precious name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

Here is an awesome habit to develop. If you have little ones that are keeping you up at night, start praising God before you pick them up out of the crib. I mean it, literally. Just before you pick that precious crying baby up into your arms, praise God for His graciousness and generosity. Thank Him for trusting you with His baby. It is amazing how praising Him gives you peace within itself.

Mothers with older children that may have different types of issues, whether developmental or behavioral, suffer the same types of patterned stress. Do the same, my sisters. Before handling whatever situation you find yourself doing over and over with that child, praise His holy name. Praise Him for His mercy and being your tower of strength. Thank Him for that special child that He entrusted you with, for you have been picked especially for such a time as this.

God's Perfect Paintings

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Psalm 19:1

My older son, Anthony and I have always had a unique relationship. I guess you could say that we connect on a spiritual level. Since he was just a tiny boy he would tell us he saw angels and would talk to them. He became a Christian when he was the tender age of three and has never wavered. Anthony and I had many deep talks about the Lord and how awesome and mysterious His ways are.

We also share the love of nature and animals that God has created. I'll never forget the first time Anthony and I shared a sunset together. We sat on the stoop of our house in North Carolina and admired the brilliant colors washed through the sky. It was a marriage of oranges and yellows, purples and blues.

Anthony put his sweet small hand on my leg and moved in closer to me. "Momma, did God make this sunset for us?"

"Yes, I guess you could say that. Everything is made by God. He shows us how much He loves us by giving us these gifts of beauty. Just like the flowers and animals." I could feel a rush of excitement and love from my Heavenly Father as I explained this to Anthony.

My deep-thinking son sat very still as he watched the colors slowly dance and make new pictures in the sky.

"Do you think God paints these sunsets for us, Momma?"

"Yes, I believe He does...I believe He does." I had tears filling my eyes just as I am today writing this down.

"He is letting us know He is here, isn't He?" Anthony asked with his eyes big as if he just won the lottery.

“You’ve got it, Anthony. He is showing us His love for us and giving us a reminder that He is here for us.”

It took everything I had to keep it together. Sitting there with the most beautiful sunset from my Heavenly Father and my son who is so full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, and I was learning from him, my 4 year old son. I didn’t know if I wanted to stand and shout praises to the Lord or cry like a baby, face down to the ground in humility.

I decided to pull my son closer; close my eyes and thank God for such an awesome son, a beautiful sunset and an unforgettable lesson. (And, of course, let a few tears of joy stream down my cheeks.)

Ever since that day, when we see a sunset, we say to each other, “Hey, look at the sunset God painted for us today!” And we thank Him for always being there for us, thinking of us and loving us so much that He paints a beautiful sunset for all His children to see.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your presence in my life. You always remind me that You are Lord of my life at the precise moment that I need it and I thank You for that. May I never become immune to Your gifts of beauty nor Your precious whispers. Lord, I thank You for the valuable moments I have with my children. You teach me Your ways even through small children...thank you.

Spirit Builder

It is amazing how sunsets practically stop you in your tracks when you catch a glimpse of them. Have you ever taken the time to admire them and discover God's paint strokes within the collage of colors? I urge you to do so. God is calling you to sit with Him and know that He is the great Painter. Each stroke is carefully designed to make the most intricate painting for you to see. It's an invitation. An invitation for you to sit and behold the great I AM. He loves you and wants to spend time with you.

The next time you see a sunset, grab a cup of coffee or tea and sit on your porch or stoop and enjoy your gift from Heaven. Notice the fine details, the magnificent colors, the mighty Hand that is behind the strokes.

Thank Him for His gift to you and notice the peace that it gives you.

Never-Ending Chaos

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer. Psalm 19:14

My husband has always been a great supporter of business ideas. He was always there to watch the kids when I would go out to do makeovers in my Mary Kay days and to do my “Gatherings” in my Country Peddler days. My husband saw it as the best way of letting me do my share in the providing for our family and still be at home for our babies.

Today, it is still the same. Tony is always there for his boys when Mommy needs to do her thang. Well, almost always. Sometimes, Hubby’s work gets in the way of Mommy’s work.

There was one time, which will be burned in my mind for eternity, when my husband’s work got in the way of mine. And sisters, I believe frazzled, might be an understatement.

I had a speaking engagement one Thursday night and my husband and I had it all planned out. It was local so I would be able to go set up while the children were in school and Tony would be able to watch the kids while I went to speak that evening. Simple, right?

Two days before the engagement, I get a call from my dear hubby that made my life absolute chaos. Tony was to leave the next morning and may (or may not) be able to come home in time for my commitment. I’m sure you’re thinking, “How hard could it be? Get a babysitter and move on!” I wish it were that easy.

Of course, my first reaction was to go into panic mode and look for someone to baby-sit. Well, there was a downfall to that plan. The ladies who usually watch my children in emergencies were going to attend my speaking engagement. (And yes, we are those picky parents that won’t let their kids be babysat by just anyone.)

I called around without any success. I decided that God had set this speaking engagement up for me and He would be the one that would make a way.

After calling around all day for a prospective babysitter, I needed to go pick up the kids from school. No drama there “Thank you, God.”

We pulled up into the drive way and the boys went shooting out of the van straight to the backyard. I thought this was great; I can get my things ready for the engagement.

When I went into the house to let my parrots out of their cages for some playtime, I noticed that our cockatiel was acting a little funny. She fluttered to the floor and, as she landed, I saw a drop of blood on the floor. I picked her up and she started flapping her wings profusely, splattering blood everywhere. I tried not to panic. I ran for a towel to hold her so I could take a closer look. You would think wrestling with a cockatiel would be a simple task, but think again. They get some awesome strength when they are frightened.

After wrapping her into the towel, I found the culprit. It was a feather that had been cracked in a very delicate place in her wing. Now, I know what you are supposed to do with a broken blood feather but I just couldn't see myself getting pliers and pulling this one. It was in a serious place and one false move of the bird would cause serious injury. I tried putting pressure on it and applied the powder they use to stop bleeding to no avail.

To keep the kids from panicking, (we already had one of us on the verge.) I wrapped the bird in a clean towel and went outside to the van, called the kids in and told them that we needed to go to the vet. I didn't offer any more details. They came running and jumped in but asked me repeatedly, “Why, why, why....?”

Finally, I broke down and told them that “June” had a broken blood feather and I couldn't stop the blood and I did not think I could pull it out myself. They didn't panic, but they definitely weren't thrilled with the thoughts at what they may be looking at when we got to the vet.

We drove to the vet and they were closed! I went up to the door with bird in tow and looked for an emergency number or something. Thankfully, the ladies on staff were at the front desk and saw me with a towel. They thought I was bringing in a “found bird,” but it got their doors to open!

Long story short, June almost didn’t make it. By time I had handed her over to the vet, she was limp. I was correct, it was a very delicate situation and they had to put that dear bird under anesthetics. Can you believe that one?

We got her back and she was like a wet noodle. She just wanted me and no one else. She just cuddled into my chest and went to sleep. All these things happening and the receptionist hands me a bill with a smile on her face. The bill was \$130!! OUCH!

Tony should like this one, I thought.

After arranging a payment plan with the receptionist and trying to keep the boys from playing pass-the-parrot, we went home emotionally and financially exhausted. June was a bit tipsy and decided to curl up on my chest and neck and go back to sleep as I drove back home, to once again, try and get ready for my commitment and find a babysitter.

That evening, I got a call from my husband who was safely hundreds of miles away, telling me that there is a chance that he would be able to make it home in time to watch the kids. HURRAY! (Not so fast, Rochelle.) Tony went on to share that it was indefinite and he wouldn’t know for sure till that day.

I still had a chance for relief. I decided to take a rest from being stressed over a babysitter for a little while and work on my laundry. This is one of those chores I seem to do by automatic pilot. I don’t think about anything going wrong. I just put the load of clothes in, pour in the laundry detergent and softener and WA-LA! Of course, not this time. My washer thought it would take a little siesta and not finish the cycle. This was a brand

new washer. I called it my Mercedes of Washers. We just got it weeks before. It was one of those awesome front-loaders with all the bells and whistles. Now my 'baby' was letting me down. I was afraid to call Tony at the hotel to tell him, so I played and played with the buttons, called the 1-800 numbers and read the manual. I had no success.

After many, many phone calls between Tony, the store and manufacturer, I had someone come in and look at it, while getting ready for my speaking engagement, nursing a wounded and druggy parrot and doing my motherly and wifely duties.

Everything did come together. Tony came back about a half an hour before I went on, June turned out fine and the washer was replaced, free of charge!

I thought those couple days would never end nor did I think I would get through them and have my sanity intact. I found myself looking for the next bad thing to happen. But through all the chaos, I was able to laugh. I laughed even more when it was all over. I kept reminding myself that God is with me, God is my strength and as long as I keep Him first and rely on Him for EVERYTHING, it will all turn out. After all, isn't He the one who calls us to be a mother, a wife and His good and faithful steward? As long as we seek Him and His purpose for us, He will be there and it will work out. Maybe not as we think it should but it does in His will. And that is our main goal as children of God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the strength You give me through all the chaos in my life. You let me lean on You when I can't stand any longer. I am able to laugh in any situation because of Your comfort. Thank you, my Heavenly Father. Never let me forget the humor in which You created in me. Keep my eyes upon You as I go through the potholes of life. May my heart and mind always be full of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Spirit Builder

Did you know that laughing is one of God's greatest medicines? True laughter gets the endorphins' flowing throughout our body and naturally heals. It makes us feel good, it gives us energy.

Make a date with an old girlfriend or someone that you have been known to laugh with. Someone you laugh with so much you that your cheeks and ribs hurt from laughing so hard; for so long. Go out to a comedic movie. Make a point to go out afterwards for coffee and/or dessert and talk about the movie or reminisce about old times. Laugh, sister, Laugh!

Miracles of Miracles

“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 41:13

Have you ever wished that your Heavenly Father could reach down and hold your hand? Sometimes we feel so small and inadequate and we yearn for someone to swoop us up in their arms and tell us it will be okay. We do have that someone. God sits on His throne waiting for us to lift our hands and say, “Father, could you give me a hand please; I don’t think I can do this alone.”

I was pregnant with my second child. The pregnancy in itself was a miracle; I was told, I was unable to become pregnant again. I had problems with my first pregnancy, existing “woman issues,” and on top of that I was diagnosed after the first pregnancy with Ulcerative Colitis Disease. But with much prayer and faith, we were expecting within two years.

I had been quite sick throughout the pregnancy, but something didn’t seem quite right during the third trimester. I was having Braxton Hicks every evening at the same time that were lasting for 8 minutes each time. This started to put much stress on my body, which resulted in my Ulcerative Colitis Disease going out of remission.

I called the obstetrician and he decided it would be a good idea to come in and take a stress test. I came in with no fear. It was just a routine stress test, right? The nurses left me lying there for what felt like an hour. When they finally came back to relieve me of the huge belt and wires, they looked at the print out then looked at each other with concern. They explained that after what was to be the normal fifteen-minute test, a contraction had shown on the print-out. It wasn’t good; the baby’s heart rate was going down to thirty-four during the entire contraction, which were averaging eight minutes long.

They called my husband immediately to meet us at the hospital for further stress tests. Unfortunately, these tests were more uncomfortable than the first. I had to take a stress test that consists of manipulating my nipples with a rough washcloth for ten minutes until I had three contractions. This I had to do with a nurse right beside me. I'm not the most modest woman in the world, but that was very embarrassing. I actually asked if my husband could help with this but they refused.

I did hit the goal of three contractions within ten minutes on my second try. Sadly, I failed again. The baby's heart rate was still going down to thirty-four the duration of the 8 minute contractions.

I was forced to stay in the hospital for observation for at least twenty-four hours. I did not sleep that whole night. Contractions came inconsistently at eight-minute durations with the baby's heart rate going lower and lower. Each time this happened the nurses had to roll me from side to side like a beached whale to raise the heart rate up to normal.

The nurses said that they were going to call the doctor at 6 a.m. to come and take the baby; this was too strenuous for the baby to stay inside of the womb any longer. The doctor was called in and he came to check out the vitals and the print-out of the activities the night before. (Oh yea, I forgot to let you in on a lil' tidbit, my own doctor was stuck in the mountains due to a snowstorm...figures.) This doctor told me with a blank face, "We'll just have to keep you another night and see what happens."

"What do you mean? We need to get this baby out. Isn't this hard on the baby? All the times his heart rate went down for so long?" I could feel the anxiety rise in my body.

"Well, the baby isn't dead yet, is he?" The doctor answered in an egotistical tone.

I absolutely lost myself! I jumped up in my bed and told that doctor to get out of my room or I was going to kill him. All godliness was out the door. As a mother, I'm sure you know you don't mess with our cubs. I was ringing the nurses' bell and yelling at him to get out of my room. When the nurses finally came and escorted the

doctor out, I called my husband, Tony, and told him to call our doctor's office to tell them to get us a new doctor on the case.

Once my original doctor called from the mountains and calmed me down, we got a competent doctor, with some decent bedside manners, to come see us. It was decided that since I did not have any sleep for over 24 hours, I needed to be put on a small amount of morphine to keep me asleep until the next morning at 8 a.m. After that they would look at the baby's lungs to see if they were developed enough for the baby to come out into the world.

God had different plans.

I have to admit that I was quite nervous about the whole thing. I had been so sick with my Ulcerative Colitis Disease during my pregnancy and was on so many medications that I was starting to worry what I had done to my baby. I wasn't sure what this outcome was going to consist of. Yes, you could say that I was filled with fear for the unknown.

The morphine had no power over what was about to happen. I woke up at 2 a.m. screaming. I took my covers down and all I could see is my stomach so tight that I could see how the baby was laying on his side curled up in the fetal position. I was having a horrendous contraction that just wouldn't let up. The nursing staff came into my room in a panic. One nurse, looking at the computer told us that the contraction was going off the charts. No kidding, I thought. The baby's heart rates, once again, was going lower and lower, this time going into the 20's. They tried to tickle the baby to see if that would stop the contraction but there was no success. The contraction lasted nine minutes and I was exhausted. The nurses rocked me back and forth once more to get the heart rate of the baby to jump up again.

Just as the nurses got all the wires back in place and the monitor back on my tummy, I went right back into another contraction. They were talking me through it and holding my hand through the whole contraction; while we listened to the heart rate go down slower and slower. As I started to relax and the contraction

subsided, we all realized the heart rate was still slowing down. We all looked at each other in silence, as if time suddenly stood still except for the sound of the heart beat. Within seconds, we heard the last heart beat and then...nothing.

All I could muster was, “Oh my, his heart stopped.”

Panic took over the room. One nurse yelled to call the doctor; another pushed the nurses’ desk call-button. Two other nurses were unhooking all the apparatus that was connected to my body and started to wheel me out of the room hitting everything in sight. The seriousness of it all came to reality for me when we hit over trash cans and the janitor’s equipment to get down the hall to the surgery room, and the nurse, who had been on shift every time I stayed in the hospital during the pregnancy, was on top of me crying rolling me back and forth trying with all her might to jumpstart that precious baby’s heart.

When I looked into the nurse’s determined crying face, I saw a person who loved a baby she hadn’t even met yet. She had love for her job, a determination and love for life. I felt an unexplainable calmness come over me. As she was feverishly rolling me back and forth, I put my hand on her arm and calmly told her, “Everything is going to be alright.” And I went into prayer, out loud. As I ended, we were in the operating room and they were hooking me back up to the monitor.

The baby’s heart rate was back up. The doctor came in and we had a successful emergency C-section. The problem was the baby, Noah, had an umbilical cord of 1 inch. The whole entire pregnancy, stress test ordeal and delivery were miraculous! And God was holding my hand the whole time. Not only was He holding my hand, but also Noah’s.

When I needed my Heavenly Father to hold my hand rolling down the corridors of the hospital, He was there. Oh, what comfort that was!

Prayer: Father, Thank You for Your unconditional love! As long as I am Your child I know that You will be there for me. May I remember to keep reaching for Your strong and comforting hand. Amen.

Spirit Builder

Take time with your Heavenly Father. Sit down and make a daily schedule out. Have moments for devotions, Scriptures and prayer. Make time for the One who is always there for you. Write down this time in your date book or calendar as an appointment. We are more likely to keep an appointment that is written down rather than just saying we'll 'make time'. Put together appointments for God in the morning before your day starts and appointments for before you go to bed.

Of course you can spend time with Him anytime, but this will get you started to a less frazzled life and a much deeper walk with Him.

Tripping Over the Flesh

If the Lord delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm, though he stumbles, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand. Psalm 37:23-24

We all know that motherhood is not easy. But did we realize this when we were little girls playing house and being a mommy to our dolls and teddy bears? I'm not quite sure if I did. My mother had been a single mom since I was 10 years old and I knew it was very hard for her. But back then I would tell myself that I am not going to end up alone with kids. Though I am not a single parent at the present, nor do I plan to be, I am not naïve enough to think that it can't happen to certain people. It can happen to the best of us, whether through divorce, our spouse being deceased or any other reason.

Motherhood is just hard, whether you are married, single or even living with your parents. No matter how hard we try to stay within the guidelines of "godly parenthood" or act like they tell us in the maternity magazines, we still will find ourselves tripping over our flesh.

No matter what situation we are in as a mother, we need to keep God's instructions at hand and live by them. With our first child, Anthony, we made sure that we did what God asked of us. We were raising our son to honor God and love Him. We took him to church to learn about Jesus and to learn how to fellowship with other children of God. We were slower to anger than we had been in a long time. I even took "Toddler to Preschool" classes in the church. We were raising our son in the training and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4) But sometimes, it seems to makes no difference. There are no guarantees about how our children will turn out. We can point our kids in the right direction, but once they become adults they are on their own and have to make their own decisions. Yet, we still get into all the "right things" to do for our children and get completely frazzled. Why?

The answer is right inside of you; your heart. God made us women with a motherly instinct. He made women the ones who hold the growing baby within us for nine months and bond. Because of this, we will do anything and everything that we think is best for our children. Whether we adopt or carry our children, our motherly instincts do kick in.

If we truly seek His kingdom first and follow what He instructs in the Bible for living and rearing our children, we can't go wrong.

Our issues as a human, though, get in the way. As I mentioned before, we tend to do what we are told to do by our culture. Not that taking our son, Anthony to church was bad, or going to all the classes was incorrect. Over scheduling our child and ourselves was where we went wrong. Going to church every time the door swings open will not save our children.

We noticed the more we extended ourselves in doing the "right thing," the more stressed we became, the more stressed we became the more we would trip over our flesh. We would end up not being very godly at all. It is because we weren't truly seeking God's kingdom, we were seeking "culture's kingdom."

The good news, God knows our hearts and He will bless us for our influences, the positive impact we have on our children, the unconditional love we have for them and for honoring Him with our efforts of steering our children towards Him.

God does hold our hand through parenthood. We just need to stay in His will and not in our culture's will.

Prayer: Lord, I lift up Your name, for You are the Great Teacher. I thank You for giving me a chance to pass on my love for You and share Your greatness with these children You so graciously entrusted me with. I ask You to keep my eyes open to the differences in Your will and the will of my culture around me. I lift up my children to You and dedicate them to You. Keep me energized and aware of the teachable moments that You put before me.

In Your Son's precious name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

The next time you sit down with your Bible and cup of tea, open up to the book of Proverbs. There are so many great lessons and advice in the book of Proverbs. We all have come to either fear or dislike the Proverb's Woman Scriptures, but take a look at the book as a whole. If we would just concentrate on this wonderful advice and guidelines, we would be much happier and all the more blessed.

If you haven't already noticed, you will find that parental counsel is vast in this great book of knowledge and wisdom.

Start today with the book of Proverbs. Read a Scripture a day and you will prosper and grow in your walk with God; guaranteed.

Momma Sees All

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer. 1 Peter 3:12

I never believed it when my mother told me. I could not understand how in the world she would know exactly what I was doing while being in a different room than I was in the house.

“Stop making faces at your brother!”

“Get out of the refrigerator!”

How did she do that? She would often tell me that she had eyes in the back of her head like all mothers do. I remember having nightmares as a child. Seeing my mother with eyes under her hair in my dreams was not something I would forget. So you could imagine how aggravating it was when she would remind me of this “special gift” she had knowing that I would have nightmares that night, and that I will never get away with anything.

Now that I am a mother myself, I enjoy telling this same tale to my boys. Yes, it may seem cruel to some, but how else do we explain this other special gift God has bestowed upon all mommies of the world. This sixth sense we have that no man could ever relate to.

We sense when something is going to happen to our children if they keep jumping up and down on the bed. We know when they are touching each other in the back of the van. We realize when it’s too quiet - they are into something they shouldn’t be. It’s just being a mom.

“Quit sticking your tongue out at your brother.”

“You better get out of the pantry, supper will be ready soon!”

“Awe, Mom, how did you know I was in the pantry?”

“Because Mom sees all, honey...Mom sees all.”

We sure would have a lot more stress on us if we didn't have that special mommy gift. But let's face it; we don't have eyes on the back of our heads. We only have the two eyes God gave us. With these eyes, we can evaluate situations, seek necessities, keep you and others out of danger, show others what you're feeling and much more.

Unfortunately, our human eyes have limitations and they really can't see all. Whose eyes are really all-seeing and all-knowing is God's.

Like a mother's eyes, God watches because He loves us. He watches us to guide us and encourage us; to take care of us and to comfort us. Our Heavenly Father loves us so much that He keeps an eye on our past, present and future. Not only does He keep an eye on us, but everything else in the world; from every star in the universe to every ant in the earth. He knows when a bird falls out of its nest and when we grow a new hair on our head. Now that is amazing.

Prayer: Lord, thank You so much for the eyes You have given me! These eyes let me see my precious children's faces and let them see the love I have for them. I pray that they also see Your love for them through these eyes.

Thank You for watching every step I take. Thank You for loving me enough to never take Your eyes off of me.

Amen.

Spirit Builder

Slow down today. Take in every sight you see and thank God for all the beautiful things He has created for you. Thank Him for the eyes He gave you.

Pamper your eyes. Cut two slices of cold cucumber and put them on your eyes, leaning your head back on a fluffy pillow. Relax and meditate on what God has shown you through His eyes. Think about what His eyes may look like. Do you see your reflection? Can't you see the love He has for you? Wow, that's enough to make your heart zoom! Take it all in. Thank Him for watching over you.

Collect Call from Heaven

The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. Psalm 34:17

My husband and I moved away from our families in Pennsylvania when my first son was eight days old. We have moved three times since, and that is only counting the areas, not the homes. (This is within 11 years.)

I was always close with my family, especially my Gram and Papa Furlong. They were like my second pair of parents. My phone bill was outrageous when we moved away. Gram would even call me once a week to try to cut down the costs, but it really didn't do much good. I just thought that was buying me another time to call her.

Although we lived 470 miles away, I came home with my babies as much as I could. Gram and my eldest son, Anthony, had a very special relationship; a lot like she and I had. When they got together you could hear the laughter from outside the house. Only Gram could get Anthony to laugh clear from his toes over the simplest things.

Gram had these tiny stuffed lions and tigers. Anthony and Gram would just hold them by the tail and swing them towards each other and growl. This would just start Anthony into a giggling fit. And you know that a giggling toddler is very infectious. Gram would join right in with him till tears would be going down her face.

They also had this little game they would do in the kitchen and dining room. They called it Monsters. They would pretend an invisible monster was chasing them and they would run around the dining room table and then into the kitchen and hide between the wall and refrigerator. You have to imagine this; a tiny child and a grown grandma running from a monster no one could see and then squishing in a space of about a foot and a half wide. It was quite a funny site to see.

In the year 2006 my grandparent's house burnt down. The only things salvageable were their Bible, a rosary that was blessed by the Pope, some pictures and my Gram's jewelry from Belgium (her home country). Six months later, my Papa died in his sleep unexpectedly. To say the least, my family, especially Gram, was devastated. After I went back home, I called her every day; sometimes twice a day. I wanted to move home so badly, but knew that was not what God intended.

Sadly, Gram died nineteen months later. I thought my world was never going to stop spinning. My youngest son, Noah, was too young to really grasp everything and feel the stress and sorrow. Anthony was seven years old and he didn't know what to do with himself. Sometimes I felt like I wasn't able to be strong for him. A lot of the times I wanted to call up my Gram and get advice, but then reality would hit and I'd realize I wouldn't need the advice if she were here to call!

Anthony saw me pick up the phone and dial Gram's number on numerous occasions; only to figure out by the second ring that she wasn't going to answer. I would then slide down to the floor into a puddle of tears.

On one of those occasions, Anthony decided to ask me something that he had been wondering for quite sometime.

“Well, can't Gram call you from Heaven?”

I looked up from the floor through my tears and had to smile.

“No, honey, she can't. Besides, that would be a pretty big phone bill.”

“But, Momma, she could call you collect.” Anthony replied with confidence.

If only that were possible.

Isn't it remarkable how we rely on the phone to keep in touch with our loved ones? I don't know about you, but it was like an umbilical cord with my Gram. To tell you the truth it's like that with my mother and me today. We talk daily, numerous times. The only trouble is, it is only broken up pieces of our lives that we share. It's not like having a cup of tea together and truly bonding with each other. There still is something missing when just talking on the telephone.

Did you know that you can call on your Heavenly Father anytime? Yes, you can literally just start talking to Him and He'll be right there listening. You don't have to use special words or talk to Him in a certain order. You simply tell Him what's on your heart. He's waiting. He yearns for your conversations. You can't find a better best friend. God is the most trustworthy loved one you'll ever know!

Prayer: I love you, Lord! Thank You for accepting me for who I am. Lord, keep my ears open and listening for Your whispers. Keep me in check with my godly walk and I will share all my deepest concerns and joy with You.

Thank You for being my best friend and always being there when I'm in need of some conversation, encouragement or just plain venting. In His precious name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

Make a Prayer Basket today. This will be for you to take into your prayer closet. Not only do you want to have your Bible and a notebook with you, but you will want to have a basket filled with a few essentials.

You'll want to have a travel packet of tissues for the tears you share with God. A stack of nice note cards, greeting cards and thank-you cards. Also a pen, a small address book and stamps should be in your basket.

When you are praying for someone or if God brings someone to your mind, write them a note that you prayed for them. Sometimes God will put on your heart to thank someone for being your friend or for doing something special. Let them know that God mentioned them in your prayers. It is an awe-inspiring way to share how important they are to Him.

Free Your Mind

I will watch for the Lord; I will wait confidently for God, who will save me. My God will hear me. Micah 7:7

What a comfort is it to know that no matter how hectic our days are, no matter how bad the world is, our Lord is coming back. Through all the pandemonium He still can hear our cries, pleads and prayers. That is an amazing reality that we can count on.

As mothers, we have a lot of heartache, stress and mayhem in our daily lives. We tend to try to wear many hats and suddenly, in the midst of it all, we cry out to God and ask for mercy. At least that is what happens in my home.

The past three years have been quite the adventure in the mom-department for me. My youngest son has been having major issues ever since he started kindergarten. This wasn't a total surprise to me. You know how we moms are; we know when there is something not quite right with our homes and children. It was no different for me with Noah. I realized Noah was a bit "off" at three months old. And if I look back, I could probably point out a few things from the very beginning of his little life.

Going to a school setting, though, put my Noah to the edge. I thank God daily for his kindergarten teacher. She was amazing through it all. Many days we would cry together for Noah. I took comfort in knowing that she and her husband were also in prayer for him. We went through many phases, concerns and heartache together for Noah.

At first the doctors thought it was seizures and Noah went through many tests and also a week's stay in a seizure clinic. Noah had many issues with peers and his grades. He would learn something one day and forget it within a week. He would be doing great with his handwriting one moment and write like a stroke victim the

next. Many times the teacher would notice him staring out into nowhere. Other times he would look as though he was throwing a tantrum, but then never remember what happened or what he said.

Many nights I would go over to my son's bed and lay hands on him and pray to God crying for answers. I felt like it wasn't fair to the teacher or the other students to be experiencing this unknown concern with Noah. My heart broke mostly, though, for Noah. He was scared himself, and so confused. It was like he was trapped inside his own body with no control.

It didn't get any better for him the next year. Some symptoms changed, but the answers remained unknown. Daily I would have to talk with the teacher. I was continually having meetings with the school. All I knew was that he needed help and some compassion from the school system.

I don't want to go into too many details, for we are still fighting to this day on certain situations in Noah's life. What I do want to share is that through all the daily strains and questions, I would literally cry out loud to God. I would get to that point of total disarray and stop everything I was doing. I would just stand there with my eyes towards heaven and cry out for His mercies. It felt good. To know that I can speak to God anywhere that I am and that He will hear me is freeing!

We have come to some answers for Noah. He was diagnosed with Sensory Integration Disorder. We have a long road a head of us and more answers to seek, but how great it is to know that we are not alone in this. Our Creator is waiting for us to come and leave our concerns with Him. He is in control.

Prayer: Precious Heavenly Father, I humbly bow before Your throne. There are times that I just want to throw my hands up in the air and say, "I can't do this any longer!" I thank You for reminding me that I'm not supposed to be able to do it on my own, I am to lean on You. I praise You for that, Father. You are my refuge and strength! I pray that I am reminded daily of Your presence and control over all things. In Your Son's precious name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

Do you believe that He hears you anywhere you are? I hope you do. For today's Spirit Builder I want you to simply call on Him. That's right, wherever you are right now reading this, I want you to stop and tell God what is on your mind. What concerns you have, what is keeping you up at night; what is keeping you from living without worry? Now if you are in a place that you are not comfortable to speak aloud, just silently bow your head and go to the Throne Room. He is waiting for you.

Spirit Builder Challenge: If you are in that place of being uncomfortable in audibly speaking to God, I challenge you to get out of the box and speak out loud to Him anyways. Go ahead, free yourself; witness to those around you. You belong to a God who can hear you anywhere and everywhere.

Awesome Answers from Abba

When I was in trouble, I called to the Lord, and He answered me. Psalm 120:1

As mothers, we are the ones who answer the many questions of little ones and are the driving force behind accomplishing their numerous requests. Because we are in that decision mode most of our waking hours, we have a tendency to forget that we have someone we can go to for answers and direction as well. Our Heavenly Father promises to give us an answer. He also promises to never to leave us to deal with life alone.

I am the first one to admit that there are times God has to hit me with a heavenly 2 x 4 over the head to get my attention. I am one strong-willed, task-oriented gal. If I get in decision mode for the bigger questions in my family's life, I become totally encompassed with that matter. I am known ignore my surroundings due to being so preoccupied.

We were living in Warren, PA for nearly close to a year when Tony came home one day and said that he and his team at work was being bought by another company. We had only a couple of weeks to decide where we wanted to go. The places to pick were Detroit, Michigan, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Now let's back up a little so you can get the big picture.

We lived in Winston-Salem, NC for five years and moved back up to PA to be closer to our families due to my health issues. It was wonderful because we were only two hours away from our families and it was a bonus that we finally lived out in the country. Not even a year later, we are being forced to move again. On top of that, we have the decision to move either four hours away from our families or go back down to Winston-Salem.

Normally, that wouldn't be too tough of a decision, since Detroit was already out of the question because Tony traveled there many times for work and didn't like it.

The dilemma was that I wasn't at peace with the obvious answer. We took a trip to Harrisburg to get a feel for the place and I knew without a shadow of a doubt that I did not want to raise my kids there if I had a choice. But the thought of being only four hours from family kept ringing in my mind.

I would wake up in the middle of the night thinking about Winston-Salem. I never thought once to ask God what He was up to, (Which is something I would normally do.) There was another matter to take into consideration. My grandparents' house had just burnt down six months before and my grandfather had just passed away a week before we got this news. My family and I were still healing and I did not want to leave my grandmother. My heart was breaking knowing we had to make a decision soon on top of everything else.

My boys were five and one years old. Anthony was about to graduate from kindergarten and he made many new friends. I wasn't worried about Noah; he was still at the age of adjusting well. But Anthony, he is my emotional child. I knew he wasn't going to take the news easily.

I was beginning to become obsessed with this choice we had to make. I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat, I couldn't even think anymore.

Warren Pennsylvania is a very small town. You can drive from one end of the town to the other in about ten minutes and that's with hitting all four red lights. There wasn't much to do there but go to the YMCA, which was a great thing for me and Noah. I needed to loose some weight and Noah needed to socialize.

We couldn't find a church that matched our needs, so I used my exercising sessions to worship and talk with God. This was my time for cleansing my body and soul and praising my Heavenly Father. When I was in the weight room I would go off on my own on the machines and pray with God. This was my two hour daily routine. Talk about a stress release!

One day I was feverishly exercising on the stepper while pouring my heart out to God. I stopped when I almost got to the point of bawling my eyes out for all to see. I went on silently exercising. I wasn't even waiting on God; I was that preoccupied with myself and the decision that sat before my husband and me.

“When are you going to do something for Me instead of yourself?”

I suddenly stopped the machine and swung around thinking there was someone right behind me. There was no one.

“Did you hear that?” I asked one of my Y friends.

“Hear what?” she said looking at me puzzled.

“Never mind,” I said embarrassed. I knew then that it was God speaking to me. It was the only way that I would snap out of it and come to Him.

I instantly went straight to the childcare, got Noah and drove home. I called Tony at work and said I knew what we had to do.

“We need to go to Winston-Salem. I heard God audibly when I was exercising today, Tony! I truly did. I've got to stop thinking about ourselves and cling to what God has planned. We need to at least go check out Winston again, Tony. We have to.”

Tony was silent. Then he agreed, it had to be God for me to out of the blue come to a decision, especially the decision he didn't think I would make.

We did go down to Winston for a couple days and I knew instantly that we were to be there again. It was like we never left when we saw our old friends and attended Sunday church. It was truly an answer from God. That 2 x 4 hurt a little but it sure was an awesome answer.

Six years later, we are still here; just waiting for God's next move.

Prayer: Thank You, God, for never giving up on me. I pray that You make Your presence known clearly when I am not paying attention. Please keep my eyes on You in all things that I do and say. I praise You for Your divine wisdom and I thank you for heavenly 2 x 4's. In His Name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

Nothing is too small to be brought before God. He cares about every little and big thing that happens in your life. Whatever burdens you carry, He can take them. The joys that you experience, He wants you to share them with Him.

Get a journal or notebook and start writing letters to God. They are just like prayers; sometimes it is just easier for us to bare all and share all with Him in writing. Make sure you date your prayers so that when God speaks to your heart, you can record the date and share the answer.

Pediatric Persecution

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. Revelation 3:21

It's unfortunate that our children have to come in contact with persecution before they actually learn what the word means. Most likely it is persecution that is actually aimed at their parents but the kids are in the line of fire nonetheless.

When my husband and I moved away from family 470 miles with our eight day old son, we were fortunate to find a wonderful church. This made our walk with God and the determination of raising our children in His ways all the stronger.

As Anthony grew in age, our beliefs became more evident in his life. When he got to the age of watching television, we were more sensitive to the contents of the shows and the amount that he would watch. Instead of letting him watch any television show for children, we would put in Christian oriented children's movies for him to watch. We started to instill him with God's promises and provisions.

Anthony had become aware of God at a very early age. At the age of two he was speaking of his Heavenly Father without a thought that it could be uncommon to others.

There were times when we would take him up to Pennsylvania to see our family and friends or they would come down to see us and they were taken back by the way we were raising him. I agree, seeing a tiny guy talking about God like he was a seasoned preacher was a bit odd, but at the same time so wonderfully amazing to us!

There were times that he was teased for his little ways and things that he would say. It would exasperate us and at the same time break our hearts, but we knew that we were doing what we were called to do as parents.

At times I would get a bit hot headed with my friends and family or even strangers that had something sarcastic to say. I've even become alienated by some friends. But then I would be comforted by Revelation 3:21 and know my husband, Anthony and I will be sharing a seat with our Savior for overcoming such persecution.

Prayer: Lord, I just praise You for Your almighty power! Because of Your power I can stand firm! I pray that I stay strong and that no one will be able to tear me down. I know that You will answer this prayer for You are the Great I am and no one can conquer those who follow You. I ask that You help my husband and I stand strong for our beliefs in raising Your babies. Keep us grounded and focused on Your will. Thank You in Jesus' powerful name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

I pray that you are keeping up with your daily readings of Proverbs.

Take a tablet or some sticky notes and start writing down your favorite Proverbs Scriptures and put them all over the house. Put them on places that you will see them frequently like your bathroom mirror, the refrigerator, your car dashboard, even your bed's headboard! Be reminded of God's advice and promises. Rejoice that He cares enough to give you an instructional book of life; the Bible.

Ruth's Faith

Then she said, "Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants." Ruth 2:12-13

One of my favorite women of the Bible is Ruth. She was such a noble woman whom we can take many lessons from. Not only was she a woman of love and loyalty, but she was a woman of great humility. No matter what blessings or favor came her way, she did not become proud.

What impresses me the most is that Ruth totally put trust into a God that she was not taught to follow growing up. She learned of Israel's God through Naomi and her family. This commitment and trust Ruth displayed for God was so impressive Naomi knew she could not change her mind in following her back to Bethlehem. It was so apparent to Boaz that he blessed her and gave her special favor.

How could the trust of Ruth not be inspiring? She was a destitute woman from a foreign land that worshiped false gods. And there Ruth was, committing her whole life to her mother-in-law and Israel's living God, trusting His sovereignty all the way.

Because of her trust in God, her whole life and those in it were blessed beyond belief! Ruth and Boaz ended up marrying and soon after became parents to a son named, Obed. They, in turn, became parents in the royal line that produced King David. Of course, the royal line went further than that, but you get the picture.

Anyone who trusts God with their whole life and soul is redeemed and blessed. We, as mothers and Believers should have thanksgiving and delight in our hearts for God, who has redeemed us from our sins.

Prayer: Lord, I rejoice in Your grace and mercy! Thank You for sending Your Son to redeem us from our sins. You are my rock! I pray that I will always have the insurmountable trust in You that Ruth so successfully displayed. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

Today, go to a quiet place where no one can disturb your time with God's Word. It could be in your prayer closet, it could be before you go to bed. It can even be out in the field. Just be sure to get yourself a nice drink, your Bible and maybe even a highlighter. Read the book of Ruth and learn from her. She may have not become a mother till the end of the book of Ruth, but she was quite the woman.

We need to concentrate on our walk with God before truly becoming a godly mother. So take time to spend an hour or so with God and His book on Ruth. God is faithful and we need to trust in that and live responsibly, for we will reap the sweet nectar of God's grace.

His Steadfast Faithfulness

In God I will praise his work, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. Psalm 56:4

Most of us would not think of anyone physically hurting us. We only see it on television and in the newspapers. Sometimes we don't take into consideration the physical errors people can inflict upon you.

For the privacy of the doctors, I will not mention their names or location, but I do want to share this story with you to illustrate the power of God's faithfulness in all things. I don't believe that these doctors purposely meant to do physical damage to me and my unborn son but this is a prime example of how humans can mistakenly hurt us.

I was pregnant with my first son, Anthony. I had been diagnosed with gestational diabetes and was on close watch. I was going to the obstetrician daily for the last month of my pregnancy. One of the doctors noticed that my feet were swelling and decided to take my vitals. It was concluded that I had toxemia and that I needed to go to the hospital to have labor induced.

I was admitted into the hospital and they started the IV right away. The nurses kept me moving to help my labor along. Our families came to the hospital to watch me as I went in circles in the hallways dressed like a big bloated Rocky Balboa in my terrycloth robe. I felt like I was in training for a big fight. Unfortunately I was.

By the next morning, I was having irregular contractions and only dilated to a 2. To our surprise they sent me home with contractions and told us to call if they became regular and five minutes apart.

They let me go like that for a week. I went to the doctor's office for a check-up and my second doctor asked me why in the world I didn't have this baby. He had no clue that his partner had me hanging on like this through

my pregnancy. Again I was admitted into the hospital and had labor induced although I was already having contractions.

My contractions started becoming regular and very strong. I was in immense pain and knew that something was not right. I was going on my 44th week, two weeks past my due date.

I was in labor for 30 hours before they got the anesthesiologist to give me an epidural. I was in so much pain that it took four people to hold me down. I still remember nurses running to my room because I was screaming so loud. The worst of it was once they got the epidural in and my husband started to calm me down, telling me it was over, the anesthesiologist informed us that it kinked in my back and he would have to do it all over again. When it finally was in to stay, it only took on the right side of my body. I was feeling everything on the left side.

After 3 hours in half the pain, I felt a rush of warmth between my legs. My mother was the only one in the room with me, standing beside my bed.

“Mom, something is wrong. Please look under my blankets.” I must have said it with concern and fear in my voice because she looked at me with her eyes filling with tears.

“What do you mean, what’s wrong?”

“I felt a warm sensation flow out of me, mom. Something is wrong.”

My mom lifted the sheets and looked and my fear was confirmed. There was blood everywhere. Mom rushed out to get a nurse and the nurse came running back in with her. The nurse looked and ran back out to get another nurse. They came back together and to my anguish, the one nurse did an internal exam.

“Don’t worry Mrs. Valasek, your cervix has just ruptured. There is nothing we can do right now, we’ll have to just wait it out.”

I just looked at my mom with sheer terror. What do they mean they can't do anything about it? I was losing a lot of blood.

My father-in-law came in a couple hours later and said he was going to take over the watch and let my husband and mom go down to the cafeteria for supper. By this time I was asking everyone to pray. I knew that this entire situation was not good. I was absolutely frazzled to the bone and frightened like never been before.

My father-in-law slid into a chair beside me and held my hand while watching the television. I couldn't concentrate so I lay there holding his hand with my eyes closed.

The nurse on duty came in and updated us on the doctor's whereabouts. He thought he would have time to go out to eat with his wife for supper and then he'd be back. He gave the nurse orders to keep a close eye on my vitals and the baby's and call if we needed him.

Her second time in we didn't even acknowledge her presence. What caught us off guard was her running out saying, "Oh my."

She came back in with a group of staff members and they start undressing me right in front of my father-in-law. "What is going on?" My father-in-law asked.

"I'm sorry, but you are going to have to leave the room. Mrs. Valasek's baby is under a lot of stress and is going into cardiac arrest."

"Wait, her husband and mother are downstairs getting supper! Can someone page them?" my father-in-law said a bit on the frantic side.

"We've been paging your husband and he has not answered yet. We can't wait. Now, sir, if you could leave, please."

My father-in-law patted my hand and kissed me on the forehead and said he'd be praying while they were busy preparing me for a C-section. There I was alone with these frenzied strangers who are leaving nothing to the imagination of my body. My pride was stripped and my body filled with fear.

Tony and my mom finally ran into the room and asked what was happening. They whisked my husband away to get him scrubbed up and dressed for the operation. At the same time they started wheeling me out of the room, with mom holding my hand and running along side of the gurney.

I don't remember much after that. I had a reaction to the anesthetics and had lost a lot of blood. In reality, I was close to dying on the table.

Anthony was so big that he was literally stuck under my ribs. They had to pull with all of their might to get the baby out from under my ribs. It was terrible and quite frightening. The next thing I knew, they were showing me the baby very fast and taking him and my husband away. In the meantime they started sewing me back up and I started to feel it. They had to put me in twilight sleep to finish.

I woke up in a different room with my whole family around me passing around our new baby boy. The doctor came in and shared with us that my family almost lost both the baby and me. Both my life and my son's life were spared miraculously due to the awesome God we serve.

I actually carried my son for 10 months and we lived to tell the story. God is truly faithful.

Prayer: I thank You, Lord and I praise You for Your faithfulness! You are true to life and nothing can change You. Lord, I thank You for giving me the courage and the drive to keep going during the most fearful and unknowing times in my life. Because I can trust You, I am blessed with miracles and mercy. Praise You, Lord, to God be the glory! Amen.

Spirit Builder

Do you have a favorite snuggly blanket; a much loved pair of pajamas? Don't they make you feel cozy and secure? When you get all nestled down with your blanket and/or pajamas, does it make you think of someone you love; someone who makes you feel a warm and toasty inside? I often think of my husband or my Heavenly Father. I imagine God's big arms around me, holding me close. How safe it makes me feel.

Take time tonight, or even today if you'd like, and get in your comfy pajamas and wrap yourself in your warm blanket. Think about your Heavenly Father. Choose a word that best describes what He is to you. You can come up with loads of them, can't you?

What word do you think best describes God's character? I believe I would pick faithful.

Without His faithfulness all the other characteristics we've come up with would be changeable. They would become null and void because in time, they would be meaningless. Faithfulness is what makes God unchanging. Quintessentially, God's faithfulness is the foundation of His nature. Because of God's faithfulness, you are safe.

You Can Trust Him Always

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil Proverbs 31:11

I don't know about you but when someone doesn't trust me, I can't sleep at night. Whether it was something I did or something I didn't do, it drives me absolutely nuts! That is God's plan. You may be laughing now, but believe me, He doesn't want you to be comfortable with the fact that someone thinks you're untrustworthy.

Have you ever wondered how God feels when we don't trust Him? It must hurt Him. We all know that He didn't do anything to break His trust with us, but for some reason, many of us have a predisposed notion that because bad things happen around us God can not always be trusted. Nothing can be farther from the truth.

God has proved His trustworthiness to us since the beginning of time. Yet we treat Him as if He was one of our new physicians. We go to a doctor that one of our friends referred us to and made the conscious decision to trust the doctor regardless of having a previous relationship with him. Yet, if the doctor gives us an answer we are not happy with, we go for a second opinion. Choosing to trust a new doctor is difficult. Choosing to trust God should be easy. He is proven to be trustworthy.

The Proverbs Scripture in 31:11 constantly reminds me that in order for us to be trustworthy, we need to trust in God. The Proverb's Woman in this Scripture is trusted by her husband completely. She is not trusted simply because of marital fidelity but also her nobility and moral worth. Most importantly because she fears and trusts the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, because I trust in You, I am not ultimately bewildered now and forever. Thank You for being there for me unconditionally. Though I may become frazzled at times, I know, at the end of the day, I will always have

You. No matter what I've done in my past, present and future, I can trust that You will love me and never forsake me. Thank You, Lord. I love You with all of my heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

Do you remember the first time you trusted God? More than likely, it was the time you asked Jesus into your life. You trusted His Word and His promises. It could have been easy and it may have been hard, but the feeling of that freedom of trusting Him will never be forgotten.

Grab your prayer journal and find your favorite place to relax. Try listing the times that you put total trust in God. Beside that list, mark off the ones that God shown His trustworthiness to you. Thank God for those confirmations. On a clean page, write your present situations that you need to lay at His feet and trust Him to taking on those burdens. I promise you, He will prove to you again how dependable He is.

Tunnel Vision

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Psalm 37:3-4

I used to work in the childcare department on Wednesday mornings at church with a dear lady who had adopted Anthony and me as her own. I believe she grew a soft spot for us because we didn't have any family here in North Carolina. Anthony was only about 2 years old. We had come to love her as our "Grandma Drudie."

One Wednesday morning, someone had brought doughnuts for the staff. Anthony had gotten excited and wanted to surprise Grandma Drudie with her doughnut. As I was walking down the hall towards our assigned room, Anthony rushed around me with doughnut in hand and tried to beat me into the doorway. Unfortunately, he bounced off my big hips and ran into the door jam knocking him back at least three feet.

"Aw Anthony; not again!" I grumbled loudly, rolling my eyes. Anthony had been on a streak of hitting his forehead continually. One of the preachers would jokingly call him Unicorn because Anthony had this black and blue goose egg on his forehead for months.

As I calmly put down my things that I was carrying, I turned around to see Anthony still on the floor with blood trickling down his face with a 3 inch gash in his forehead. I instantly picked him up and took him into the room and sat on the floor, holding his forehead together.

Grandma Drudie went out in the hall and called for help. The next thing I knew women came running, and they tried to pick me up while I was holding Anthony to sit me on a wheelchair. Oddly enough, I didn't notice the puddles of blood around me until I began standing up with the help of the ladies. I'm guessing due to the sight of the blood, everything around me started getting grey and forming into a tunnel. I heard them saying, "Set her back down, set her down, she is going to faint."

Things were happening so quickly. They took Anthony out of my arms and started laying hands on him praying as someone else got a nurse in the church. Another lady took me to the nearby bench in the hall and started laying hands on me, praying.

To make matters worse, my husband was working on third shift at that time and he was home sleeping. No one could get him to answer the phone. A friend of mine drove to the house and had to knock on the bedroom windows to awake him.

My friend had to drive me to the hospital so I could hold Anthony's head together and my husband met us there. The emergency room wouldn't touch him so my husband and I drove over to the pediatricians. They wouldn't touch him either. Anthony ended up having to get plastic surgery done.

He is fine today, just a little scar under his bangs. Grandma Drudie shared that story with everyone she knew and she asked Anthony how he was till he was eleven years old and she went to be with the Lord.

That day was chalk-full of lessons.

It was amazing how focused Anthony was in getting that doughnut to Grandma Drudie. You know he still worried about that after he got hurt. Yes, he was crying, in pain and scared, but he was more concerned about his Grandma Drudie getting her doughnut. He wasn't thinking about his momma holding his head together or that there were women he didn't know laying hands on him praying. He may have been too young to appreciate it, but I believe he couldn't appreciate his blessings because he was preoccupied with that doughnut and Grandma Drudie.

Have you ever experienced being so preoccupied with doubts and worries that you missed out on your blessings and God's righteousness?

Prayer: Lord, thank You for bestowing Your favor and honor. Though I may become preoccupied at times, I long for Your blessings to rain down on me. Keep me aware of those blessings and Your hand that casts them.

Whether big or small, I thank You for the gifts that You have given me. Amen.

Spirit Builder

Go for a walk today. Or maybe ride your bike. Go somewhere outside and look around. Take a deep breath of fresh air. Smell the flowers, admire the sky. These are gifts from God. Thank Him. Don't miss the opportunity to rejoice in His awesomeness.

Rest in Him

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. Psalm 55:22

Imagine yourself climbing up a cliff. You have never gone rock climbing in your life. The last time you even went on a hike was when you were a teenager. Are your leg muscles burning just imagining this? Mine are.

Now imagine that you finally got to the top of the cliff sweating profusely and breathing erratically. A man is at the top of the cliff and offers you a lush feather down mattress or a bed of nails to rest your weary body. Which one would you choose? I'm thinking you would choose that nice soft mattress. It's the no-brainer choice, right?

But did you know that if the nails are placed in the exact same distance apart and in the correct measurement, the bed of nails wouldn't hurt? Your body is able to balance on the nails. But could you really rest? The bed of nails may be able to balance the weight of your body, but can you trust the nails enough to truly rest? I doubt it.

The same goes for your soul. As mothers, we always carry worries and stress that in turn make us tired. We have a place to lay these burdens. Yet, for some reason, we don't always trust God enough to rest them at His feet. Can you imagine if we didn't have a God that can balance the weight of our burdens and give us rest? We would be fried frazzled moms.

Trust in God, He is the only one where you can find true rest.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for being there when I need You, for giving me a place to rest my weary soul. I truly am grateful for Your faithfulness and mercies. Help me to see when it's time to be still and rest in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

When is the last time you had a nap? Take time out today to have one. Truly rest and cast your cares onto your Heavenly Father. He not only tells you to give your burdens to Him, but He promises you that He will take them and carry it all. As you drift off to sleep, tell God each burden that you are carrying. Promise Him that you will leave them with Him and not come back to reclaim them.

Divine Appointment

And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. Isaiah 30:21

When my son, Noah, was going through all the medical testing during kindergarten and throughout first grade, I was up in arms and had nowhere to turn; except into my Heavenly Father's arms. Sure, I was already praying for answers and praying for a total healing, but I felt I wasn't getting anywhere. Did I blame it on God? No, I blamed it on humans.

I began to change my prayers. I made them simple and precise. I wanted God to send the right person at His right time. If I don't see any one soon, I'm just going to claim Noah's healing.

When we pray for guidance, He answers. It may not be the way you want but He answers, in His way; in His will.

Noah goes to a pediatric dentist who specializes in special-needs children and also children who greatly fear dentists. The dentist's whole practice glows with the love of God. When you meet this dentist you know right away that he uses his dental practice as his witnessing tool. So, why should I be surprised that God used his office to find my guidance towards Noah's diagnosis?

Noah was back in the rooms while I was sitting in the waiting room...waiting. There was another lady sitting across from me waiting for her children. She caught my eye because she had a big tote bag with her and she began to take out this huge afghan and proceeded to start crocheting. Right there I should have realized God was about to do something. There is no such thing as coincidences. I love to crochet and knit and I had been working on scarves for Christmas presents.

Of course, being the extrovert that I am, I began a conversation with her about crocheting. We talked a little about the craft and then she started talking about her son. Everything she shared about him sounded just like my Noah. It was amazing, I think I was sitting there listening to her with my mouth gapped open. Every once in awhile I would add a, “That sounds just like my Noah!”

I must have looked like I was in awe because she asked me if Noah was ever diagnosed with Sensory Integration Disorder. I said, “What is that? I never heard of it.”

She shared that it took a long time to get her son diagnosed also and that there is a wonderful book out that would help me figure out if Noah had this disorder. She had me write down the book, *The Out-of-Sync Child* (Kranowitz, Carol Stock, Penguin Group, 2006) . She also went on to tell me that just by reading the first three pages, I will probably know if he had it or not.

I told her that she was an answer from God. I could not believe what had just happened. She gave me a few more tips and as soon as she was finished, the assistant came back into the waiting room with Noah in tow. It was as if I was done with the divine appointment and it was time to go and get to it.

As soon as I got home I got on the internet and started researching this Sensory Integration Disorder. And it was definitely something we had to look at. Noah fit the criteria exactly. It was definitely a miracle and guidance from the heavens.

As you already know through this devotional he was diagnosed with the disorder. To this day, I believe that we still would be searching for the answers. Don’t get me wrong, there are still answers to be found, but we have gotten the first answer we needed in order to find the other questions.

God is good. He is listening constantly for our prayers and our searching for His direction. He will answer. Just make sure you are open to His way, not yours.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I praise You for Your heavenly Guidance. Keep me humble always that I may see Your paths and not follow my own. May I stay in Your perfect will. Amen.

Spirit Builder

Take some time out to sit down and think about your life. Is it where you thought it would be at this time of your life? Are you happy with the way you are living? The big question is: Do you think your life is lined up with God's will for you?

Talk to God; ask Him if you are living to His glory. Ask Him to show you what is not glorifying Him in your life. Don't be afraid to ask Him for His guidance. You will always prosper greatly when seeking His kingdom first.

It may be easier to write things down. Write everything that you do. For example: Member of the Ladies Circle, volunteer at the hospital, teaches Sunday school. Put them in front of God and ask, is this according to your will. Just because the things you do are harmless or affiliated with the church, does not mean that they are what God wants for you. You may just need answers like I did. Write them down too and put them before His throne. You will get the answers, He promises you that.

My Father's Lap

For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death. Psalm 48:14

Psalm 48:14 is so comforting to me. God never changes. He has been here since the beginning of time and He will be here to the end. No one will take Him away from His throne. The Bible tells us this.

God guides us when we are here on earth and He guides us to eternity with Him. I don't know about you, but that makes me want to jump and shout! Heaven knows that we mommas need guidance all of our days.

If you are willing to listen, God takes you through life step by step. He doesn't force you. You won't hear Him behind you saying, "Go girl, get a move on it!" He sits on His throne, taps His knee with His hand and says, "Come, my child. Come sit with Me and I am going to help you along the way." I'm so glad that I'll never be too big to sit on my Heavenly Father's lap.

Prayer: Lord, I come to You as Your sheep. I need you to lead me and guide me to still waters. I thank You for being my Shepherd who will never let me go astray and become lost. Bless You, Lord, for You are my Guide. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

Go get a massage! Any kind you want. Massages are a great way to relax and get in to a total sense of relaxation. I find myself talking to God while I'm getting a massage. Most places you go, there is no speaking while getting your massage. Take this time to totally relax and forget about the chaotic world around you. Just be still and know that He is God.

The Talk

For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say. Luke 12:12

Being a mom, public speaker and a special-needs child advocate, I can get myself into some unpredictable situations. It doesn't help that I am an outspoken, extraverted individual either. The positive of these predicaments is that I know, because of Jesus being in my life, I will never have to worry about what I need to do or say. The Holy Spirit dwells within me and when I need guidance or even the perfect words, He takes over.

Now, I have done the worst and have taken control of the situation myself. Boy, was that a bad idea. I would end up getting my tongue tied or confusing people, or worse, hurting someone's feelings.

Being a Christian makes us responsible for witnessing to others about our Lord and Savior. And if we are truly living life with God at the helm, then we are talking of God all of the time. How could we not? He is in our lives working constantly. We should have a daily testimony.

When I do speak with the Holy Spirit totally in control, I speak eloquently and with fervor. There is nothing to worry about because I know it is not of me, it is from the perfect spirit of Christ.

I have to admit it does come in handy. When Anthony asked about the birds and the bees, I totally gave that to God.

Anthony had to see the Health Class movie at school. I did ask many questions at the school and knew that Anthony would be okay watching the movie, but I also knew he would most likely have some questions. And I, the momma, was the blessed one to get picked for the asking. Anthony didn't want to talk to his daddy this time

around, so I had no other choice. The both of us have a wonderfully unique relationship and this was something I will cherish all of my life.

Anthony had shared with me he understood most of it, but he wasn't quite sure about the sprite.

"What? What is the sprite?" I thought maybe there was something new with the birds and the bees that I didn't know about yet.

"You know the sprite that comes out of the male." He said innocently.

I pondered that for a moment and, "Oh! You mean the sperm!"

"Oh yea, that's it. I know that the sperm fertilizes the egg in the female, but how does it get there?" Anthony looked as confused as he sounded...poor kid.

Again, I pondered this question for a moment and realized the school's movie told them everything except for the miraculous part. This I knew I had to give to God because I wanted to explain it in a beautiful way. I don't want my kids ever thinking that this awesome gift from God was in any way dirty. But I wanted Anthony to also know that it is sacred.

I said a little prayer and gave it over to God, the creator of reproduction.

I will only share a little of what I told him. I believe these talks also should be sacred, but I want you to know that what I'm about to share, could not be of me; it was too beautiful.

"Well you see, Anthony, God made us all different. Every part of our bodies is made a little different from anyone else. And even while we were only a sparkle in God's eye, He had already picked who your wife is supposed to be. You, Anthony have a perfect mate out in the world today."

“Wow, really?” he asked in wonderment.

“Yes, there is a wife out there for you that has been made just for you. He had you in mind when making her. And He had her in mind while making you. So, each part was made to compliment the others.”

“You mean our privates too?” I was amazed that he caught on so quickly.

“Yes. Do you remember what the woman’s privates are called?”

He answered correctly. “And I’m sure you know the proper name of yours, right?”

“Yes, Momma.” He said, rolling his eyes.

“God had made you to perfectly fit your mate. Like a puzzle. And when you both become married you will be two puzzle pieces coming together to form one.”

“That is what sex is? When we fit together like that?” Anthony looked sort of grossed out.

“Yes, Anthony. But there is nothing gross about it. It is beautiful. Especially when you are with your wife; you should not do this until you are married or it won’t be as special. God made this to be a beautiful union. This is the highest way of showing your love between a husband and wife. And this is how, when God sees that it’s time, babies are made.”

I won’t go any further. But Anthony was very satisfied with our talk and most importantly, he understood and was not embarrassed. He now believes that sex is from God and is a very sacred thing and shouldn’t be taken lightly.

I'm sure we'll revisit that subject again for more details at the right age, but for now, that is what the Holy Spirit wanted to share.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, I want to praise You and thank You for sending Your Son to us so that we may spend eternity with You. I thank You for making it possible for the Holy Spirit to dwell within us once we allow Him to rule our lives. If it wasn't for this privilege, I know I would be a talking fool. I praise You, Lord for speaking on my behalf. In Your Son's precious name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

Is there someone who you've wanted to witness to but you feel like you will not know what to say? Your spirit builder today will definitely erect your fortitude if you choose to take this challenge.

Call this person (or persons) up and make a date with them. Maybe a cup of coffee, or meet for lunch, even a walk would be a good time to talk. Tell her that you just need to talk; we always go for that line.

Pray before you see her and let the Holy Spirit take over. To jump start your witnessing, share a situation that you have just gone through that you know there was no way you would have got through it if it wasn't for Christ being in your life. Then let God do His work.

Puzzle Paths

And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. Isaiah 58:11

Did you know that God likes puzzles? Now I'm not talking about the birds and the bees, I'm talking puzzles that, once together, become a big picture.

God has a plan for each one of our lives, but He does not want us to see the whole picture. He wants us to move or grow step by step; puzzle piece by puzzle piece. God lets us see each step before us when it is time. He knows when we need the next step unveiled to us. He knows when we are able to handle the next step.

Don't step out before His time. You've heard about putting the cart before the horse? What happens when you do that? You aren't able to get anywhere. You end up frustrated. You must remember that God's order is perfect.

Let tomorrow stay in tomorrow. Don't worry about what is going to be. Let God take care of that; you just soak in what is today. Work on it, learn it and enjoy it. Whatever it is, make sure you do it to glorify God and the next step will come soon enough.

God promises a lamp unto our feet. (Psalm 119:105) We do not need to see what is ahead. So, you can stop looking now. Keep your eyes on today.

God is in control and He is leading us. Forever.

Prayer: Lord I thank You for Your light. I praise You for Your grace. Keep my eyes on my feet, Lord and not on the big picture. Lead me and guide me and I will rest in that. Give me patience and give me peace for I tend to rush things. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

Have you found your purpose in life? I didn't find mine until I was thirty years old. Sometimes I think about all the time I wasted. I used to blame myself for not trying to seek out my purpose, but that wasn't the total truth. I remember always seeking for my purpose. I just wasn't always looking in the right places. I wasn't looking totally at God.

The best book out right now to help you start searching for your purpose is *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren (Zondervan, 2002). Go out today and buy it, or order it online. You can go to any bookstore on the internet and you'll find it. If you can't buy it right now, go to a book store that has a coffee shop and start reading it there.

Make sure you keep God in your priorities and you will find your purpose.

He Cares for Ewe

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you... And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 1 Peter 5:7, 10

We all have heard the parallels of the sheep and their shepherd with our Shepherd and us as His flock. But have you ever really looked deeper into the parallels? The Shepherd guides his flock and protects his flock from predators.

In reading *Safe in the Shepherd's Arms* by Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson, 2002), my eyes were opened to a deeper meaning into the Shepherd and sheep relationship.

In Ancient Israel shepherds used oils on their sheep as a preventative medicine. The oil was put on the sheep's head to repel the insects. The flies, mosquitoes and gnats would actually drive a sheep crazy. The flies would lay their eggs in the sheep's nose membrane. The eggs became worm-like larvae. This in turn, would drive the sheep literally insane. The stress of the sheep during this unfortunate infestation can trickle down to the rest of the flock. When a multitude of flies becomes visible the sheep are in horror and start running and hiding. They forget to eat and they can't sleep. In turn the ewes can't make milk and then the lambs start to become undernourished and stop growing. The whole flock becomes touched and devastated.

The oil was also used to heal any wounds. Wounds from butting heads during mating season and also from the wounds they got naturally from living in the pastures. The shepherd would put the oils on the rams head and horns so when they dueled during mating season, they would ricochet rather than smash off of each other.

The shepherd needed to check his sheep for injuries daily. He rubbed the oils on the wounds so the wounds would not become infected.

This is where our Shepherd comes in. Like a shepherd with real sheep, Jesus does not want us to be hurt. He doesn't want our hurt to become deeper and He doesn't want our frustrations to drive us crazy. Our hurts can turn us into bitter people. Jesus doesn't want that for us.

Like sheep, when we keep these frustrations to ourselves we soon stop sleeping, stop eating and start losing our sanity slowly by hitting our heads against the hypothetical wall. We need to come to our Shepherd for healing and preventative care. He tends to us. He promises that in Psalms 100:3.

He cares for you like you are the only sheep in the flock. He loves you. He wants nothing but the best for you. Go to your Shepherd and let Him tend to you.

Prayer: My Precious Shepherd, I praise You for You are the caregiver of my heart. Keep me humble that I may be still enough to be anointed with Your healing. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

Do you tell your friends, relatives and husband all your woes? How about even strangers? Sometimes we just can't help ourselves. Someone asks, 'How are you?' and we seem to think they really meant for you to tell them, when actually they were just looking for, 'Fine, and you?'

Today, try to not tell anyone your hang-ups, hurts or woes until you have gone to God first. If someone asks how you are, you answer: "I'll let you know after I talk to God." It's amazing how many times you'll be healed of your inner wounds just by going to God and spilling your guts. Why not do it now? Go to your prayer closet and tell Him what you're feeling. He's waiting for you. Oh, He already knows, but He wants you to lean on Him for your worries. He will tend to you. He will!

Perfect Rest

Jesus said, "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." Matthew

11:28-29

Because of my health issues, I am told to cut my stress and get a lot of rest. Did I mention that my doctor is a man? All of us have stress, regardless of gender. But both you and I know that mother's have a hard time running the opposite way of stress and getting more than five to six hours of sleep. Let's face it, most men don't understand that.

I do try my best, but sometimes I get myself in a pickle. Slowly, my body will start to shut down. I may get a cold at first, but then I start feeling awful and can't think straight. The next thing I know, I'm in bed, not able to get up. When I get sick it is three times worse than for the "normal healthy" person. I'm not saying this for you to think I'm a wimp or to exaggerate my illness. I'm telling you this because this is exactly what happens when we don't lean on God. I was talking about the physical aspect of my life, but let's look at the spiritual aspect.

If we let our heart be riddled with the stress that situations in the world hand us, our heart starts to ache. It starts eating at our spirit and we become weary. We start thinking and acting differently. We are vulnerable to depression and low self-esteem. It can then start reeking havoc on our physical bodies.

Why are we so adamant about taking on the world by ourselves? Can you imagine what it would be like if we didn't have Jesus? Wow, I don't think I want to. I'm sure, though; you know of someone or have seen someone that is a mother trying to take on the world without the relationship of Jesus to hold onto. You can see the weariness in her face and eyes. She comes off as a rough person to deal with. She is simply not happy. That is because she doesn't have Jesus to turn to.

I pray that you know Jesus. You won't find true rest until you do. His invitation never expires. As a matter of fact, He calls you to come every second of every day. When you wear the yoke of Jesus and become intimate with Him, you will never have to carry your burden alone again. Every sin that weighs you down is washed off.

Are you tired? Do you feel like you sometimes can't get out of bed? Maybe it's time for you to go to Him. Receive true rest for your soul.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for Your gentleness and grace. Lord, I cast all my cares on You. Take them and carry them for me that I may find rest. I praise You and worship You for You are Savior and Lord of my life. I can rest knowing that You have washed away my sins and each day is new. Amen.

Spirit Builder

Do you know Jesus? If you aren't sure, please talk to your pastor or someone you know that does know Him. It will be the best thing you have ever done.

Since we are speaking of rest, the best thing to do today would be to have some! What relaxes you? A nap? Maybe a bubble bath with candles and music. How about getting a manicure and pedicure. It could be just sitting with a cup of tea and reading the Word. Whatever makes you feel relax and rested, pamper yourself today with it. Go ahead; tell your children and husband I told you to!

Through It All

I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

Philippians 4:13 is my life's Scripture. Every time I am hitting a pothole in life, I get through it by reciting this Scripture over and over and truly believing in it. I know others use this influential Scripture. Most Women who tell me their stories mention Phil 4:13 and give God the credit to their success. It truly is a powerful Scripture.

I could write a whole book on the power of Philippians 4:13 and the stories of my life that it brought me through. But let me share one of the toughest times in my life that the Scripture got me through.

It was a normal Saturday at the Valasek's house; all of us in our jammies, hanging out together. I was doing laundry and some left-over chores I didn't get done during the week.

I walked past the bathroom carrying a laundry down the hall when I noticed my son, Anthony lying in front of the toilet. I stopped in mid-stride and backed up slowly to look again. I dropped the laundry basket and ran to Anthony. He was barely comprehensible when I spoke to him to ask him what had happened. He went on to tell me that he had to throw-up and after he did the next thing he knew I was getting him up off the floor.

Anthony was only 4 years old. He wasn't sure what was going on. I could see that he did throw-up, but why didn't he remembering? I took him to the couch by his dad and told him what happened. We covered him up with the quilt and told him to watch some cartoons and relax.

I was in the kitchen when Anthony ran back to the bathroom. I let him alone to throw-up and the next thing we heard was a thump. There he was passed out in front of the toilet again. I had no idea what was going on, unless he might be having seizures. I checked his temperature and it wasn't high. I called his pediatrician's office.

They told us that he just had a little stomach virus and that he would will be fine. We were to call them if it got any worse. Well, it got worse all right. Anthony started vomiting once every hour. Anthony stayed with his daddy while I was downstairs ironing some clothes, and when I came up I could see that Anthony had literally lost weight. We ran him back to the scale and he actually lost ten pounds in a half a day. We knew then that something was seriously wrong.

We rushed him to the doctors and told them that he lost ten pounds that day and he couldn't stop throwing up. They did all their poking and prodding with a few tests on the side. The doctor came back with a solemn face.

“This is serious. He has Rotavirus. This is more common to hit smaller children, but for some reason, he picked it up somewhere. Usually the older kids carry the virus home and the baby brothers or sisters get the blown-out virus. We saw in Noah's chart that he already had gotten half of the vaccine for it and it was due for the other half next month. He should be fine, but Anthony didn't get the vaccine because he was too old, so we need to take care of him quickly before he dehydrates any further.”

I have to say I was furious. Just because of Anthony's age he didn't get the vaccine, yet here was Anthony practically fighting for his life.

When they mentioned to us they were immediately putting Anthony into the hospital, Anthony went ballistic - so much that they said it was bringing more harm to him by being so upset. They made a bet with Anthony they knew they couldn't lose. The doctor told him that if he could eat two Pedialyte Popsicles and not throw up within an hour, he could go home and Mommy and Daddy could play doctors for him.

Didn't that stinker win the bet! My husband and I looked at each other and then to the doctor with fear in our eyes. Was this a smart move, letting him come home? And how in the world were we going to do this? Being the parents, it was hard enough looking at him. It broke our hearts. He looked like one of those children you see on television in those commercials to feed the children. Anthony's eyes were all sunken in with dark circles

around them. You could actually see what his skull looked like through the skin of his face. His shoulders and ribcage protruded out. He was sad looking.

Our strict orders were to feed him a teaspoon of water every fifteen minutes for two hours. If he kept everything down then we could give him a teaspoon of water every ten for another two hours and if all was well we could up it to every five minutes. If he were to vomit the water up, we had to go back to square one.

It was pitiful and heart wrenching. Tony and I would take turns holding him and giving him teaspoons of water. As one of us would take over, the other would go downstairs and cry. I could hear Tony uncontrollably bawling from upstairs. I think it was one of scariest times in our life. We could possibly lose our child and there we were, physically alone at home trying to play doctors. Each time I would go down to have my time out with God crying I would look in the mirror and just keep reciting Phil 4:13. I was bound and determined to nurse my child back to health without losing my sanity and my heart breaking.

It took a long time for him to come back to us. His immune system was compromised because of it but he is alive today. Praise God.

But the story doesn't end there. Noah had a touch of it too. Not anywhere near the seriousness of Anthony's, thanks to the vaccine. But our cat caught it. Yes, our furry feline caught the Rotavirus off the kids. Peaches was always lying with the children and I never thought that he could catch it. The vet wouldn't even believe me at first. The cat had the same symptoms as the kids and he did end up at the Animal Hospital. Because they wouldn't take my word on the Rotavirus and swore that only pigs could catch the Rotavirus, they gave back Peaches and he ended up dying in my arms screaming.

I thought I was going to lose my mind, I thought, "What else can I possibly go through without going insane?" Well, you know how God only gives you what you can handle. But I think he trusted me too much.

When Anthony was finally well enough to travel, I took him up to Pennsylvania for the family to see him. I needed to get away from the house where all the tragedy had been happening. We were gone for only a week and when I came back our dog, Sam, was waiting for us at the door. He was so excited to see us. Sam was really mine and Tony's first son. We try not to let it on with the kids, but he was our first love. (Kidding)

When I got to the top of the steps I could see blood all over the carpet. I traced the blood and there it was, coming from Sam's leg. To make a long story short, Sam ended up going to the vet and being put down due to cancer throughout his body.

I didn't know if I was going to make it. I thought for sure my little family was going to put me away in the loony bin. I had so much loss and near loss in one month I didn't know what I was going to do to get through. But then Philippians 4:13 started to go through my head and then penetrated my heart. Yes, it was still hard, but I knew that I was going to get through it with the help of the Lord.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord for being my tower of strength. Without You I wouldn't know how I could face the world daily. I know that I can count on You no matter what the situation. Thank You, Lord, for caring about everything that is on my heart. And loving me like no other. Amen.

Spirit Builder

Today is the day that you, my sister, are going to look in the mirror and love what you see! You heard me. No matter what is going on in your life, no matter what wrinkle is where. You are going to see the person God has made.

Go on, go to the nearest mirror. Look closely. See that nose? God picked that nose out just for you. It may be your mother's nose, but God picked that one over your grandfathers. He does get the choice. See your lips? God picked those too. Notice those wrinkles that popped out of nowhere? They are proof that you have stories to tell. They are marks of wisdom. No matter what is going on in your life, you can handle it. No matter where you came from, you are still the one God has created. I have even better news, God doesn't really see your outside, He sees your heart. He knows it, well, like the back of His hand, and your hand and everybody else's hand. He knows everything. And He still loves you unconditionally. Isn't that awesome? Isn't that comforting? Isn't that God?

No One Like Him

No one is like you, O Lord; you are great, and your name is mighty in power.” Jeremiah 10:6

Boy, there isn't anyone like God, is there. It totally blows my mind how powerful He is. And yet, there are people on the planet who still do not follow Him. I guess you can also look at those who call themselves Believers, yet they worship other gods.

The gods I speak of are money, power, outward appearances, social standing. Yes, there are still the gods in the third world country and even some in the United States that are worshipped. Take a look at them. Are they living? Were they created by humans? Are they disposable? Do they tarnish or get old?

God is, was and always will be. He was not created. No one gave birth to Him, no one gave Him life. He never changes. His mood stays the same, He has never made a mistake, and He has no limitations. His love is forever. He sits on the throne in eternity, yet He is everywhere. His Plan never changes. He is living!

Once you find God, you will no longer have to search for truth; for God is truth. Truth is not in education, books or in science. You won't find truth in philosophy or any other “spiritual” type mumbo-jumbo. The only true way to find truth and understand it is through a relationship with Christ. He is the prime example of truth.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for supplying us with the book of truth. Lord, I praise You for Your greatness and uniqueness. Help me to stay focused on Your truth and will. Give me strength to stay away from the false gods of the world. Give me wisdom to know the difference of worshiping them and co-habiting with them. In Jesus' Precious name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

Take some time today to get to know Jesus. God has given us a way to become intimate with Him and His Son. He provided us with the Word. Start with the book of John. This is a great way to get closer to your Creator and understand His truth.

Trapped like a Mom

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

As mothers, we sometimes feel trapped. Not necessarily to the point of chewing off our foot like a trapped animal, but we feel ensnared nonetheless. We get into these mundane routines in our daily lives and we start to wear down.

We wake up before the kids so we can take a shower (sometimes). Then we get breakfast ready and make the lunches for school. We then have to act like a drill sergeant and get the kids out of bed (and sometimes our husband). Once we get the kids fed and practically chase them to the bathroom to brush their teeth and comb their hair, we herd them to the car or to the bus stop (and sometimes our husbands too.)

Once we get back to our homes we start on our own chores, or go to a place of work outside the home. While you are NOT having your lunch during your lunch break, you are trying to figure out whether you've got to pick up Janie at band practice or Skip at soccer practice, and what time was that anyways? But before three o'clock rolls around, the kids call you anyway with the new plans and tell you that they both need picked up at the same time on opposite sides of the town. Oh, did I mention it was our turn for carpool? Once we all get home, we need to figure out what we are making for supper.

When you finally decide that it's leftover night, your husband calls from work and tells you he is bringing a buddy from work home and he is allergic to whatever it is you are having for leftovers.

You think that the day can't get any worse, but then the phone rings once more. It's a parent of one of your children's friends reminding you that you promised to have her kid over night so that she can go to a conference. And you forgot to pick him up on your way home.

Are you tired yet? I know I am. The night isn't even over and we are about to drop. The bad thing is, tomorrow will most likely look pretty much...the same. If that doesn't make you feel trapped, then we need to talk.

For one thing, if your life is anything like this you need to learn to delegate. You also need to sit down and figure out what is unnecessary. And the way I see it, someone needs to learn how to say "no," (Which I did mention in the beginning of the devotional.)

Isn't it wonderful, though, that anything we put in front of God will be taken care of? If you lay your day at His feet, He will give you the strength and power to get through it. I don't know about you, but I'm rejoicing!

Prayer: Lord, thank You for coming to my rescue when I call on You. Though I may put the stress on myself, You still give me power to carry on. Bless You, Lord. Bless You. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.

Spirit Builder

Quit running yourself ragged. Take the time to figure out your schedule and routine. What are you doing unnecessarily? Prioritize what you do on a monthly, weekly and daily basis. Have a family meeting every Sunday night and delegate those things that the rest of the family members can help with. Don't put yourself in the corner and trap yourself. You are not glorifying God when you are running in circles and dreading every minute of your mundane life. Organize, Prioritize and Delegate. Who's down with OPD? ME!

The Things Children Say

“But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head.” Psalm 3:3

Have you ever noticed that it’s easier to laugh over something that happened in the past, even if it wasn’t very funny when it happened? I own plenty of those times. I have an immense amount of humor that I believe came straight from God for obvious reasons. He knew I would need it.

I also believe, though, that I can laugh at even the most serious issues because God is my everything. He is my shield, my glory and the one I can run to for shelter. Nothing can penetrate Him. It’s kind of like hiding behind this huge shield and peeking around it saying, ‘na na na na na na’ while sticking out my tongue. Nothing can really touch me.

Just like other families, we have our little sayings. Some would think they are awful, but when said in the correct tone of voice and in the Valasek’s house, it is funny, sweet or just plain dingy.

One of our sayings is “I’m going to beat you.” It doesn’t necessarily mean you are in for a true beating, but it means I may get you down on the floor and tickle you, or wrestle you or something that will make you say, ‘uncle!’

So, if you were a fly on the wall you would hear, “Hey, if you don’t stop jumping on the bed I’m gonna beat your little behind!” And we say it with a voice that would usually make one smile or laugh because they know if they do keep it up, they will be wrestled down to the floor or tickled or whatever in a playful way.

Or, you might just hear it for the fun of it. “I’m gonna beat you lil’ man...you look like you need a beating.” And it’s a dare to come near us. But, I bet if you didn’t read the rest of this devotional, you wouldn’t know if I were being humorous or serious.

Well, let me tell you, we have learned that our little sayings aren't always safe to say just anywhere.

My two sons and I were at Wal-Mart one day. We were in the check-out line and, of course, my kids start asking for candy, gum, action cards-you name it. I calmly kept saying, "No....No....No, you may not have that....No, not this time. They were relentless that day.

For awhile, I wasn't even giving them the satisfaction of a verbal answer; I would just shake my head 'no' and give them a stern look. This didn't work either.

Finally, I said, "If you don't stop asking me...."

Anthony interrupted and said, "Don't beat me! Don't beat me, Mom!"

I thought I was going to have a heart attack right there. If I was near something big enough to fit under I would have crawled right in there.

With the way things are today on child abuse, I thought for sure I was going to get hand-cuffed and dragged out of there. Thank goodness, the woman in front of us saw the humor in it. I must look like I am a nice mother or something. But because I knew it was harmless and meant to be funny, I could just be a little embarrassed and move on.

If it wasn't for my God, I would have been in sheer terror and probably wouldn't have slept for months. But I'm sharing with you today, and I laugh about it all the time. I even share it in my speaking engagements. It's great to be able to hold you head high when your son pleads with you not to beat him. (*Snicker-Snicker*)

Prayer: Lord, I thank You for Your never failing shield. I thank You for giving me the gift of laughter and strength. Please, help me to stay this confident in You. Let me see the humor in life's not-so-funny situations. I ask all of this in Your precious Son's name. Amen.

Spirit Builder

Get out all your photos; old and new. Look at the faces in the pictures. Do they look happy? What was going on at the time of the picture? Was it a good memory or a bad one? Try to see the humor in all the pictures. Have fun reminiscing.

Unavoidable Chaos

But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

2 Thessalonians 3:3

When starting this book, I promised God and all who will read it that I am going to share my own life stories. Whether they are embarrassing or private, I was going to put myself out there so anyone who picks up the devotional will know they are not alone.

Well, this is one of those stories that make me stop and think, “Do I really want to share this?” And God answers simply, “Yes.” Other mothers need to see that because of my confidence in God, I got through this pothole in life and am able to share it in assurance.

Years back I was having an awful time with my Ulcerative Colitis Disease. I was in and out of the hospital and medical bills were adding up. Tony, also, was having a rough time of it. At the time, he had recently found out that the company he was working for was connected to...let's just say an organization that wasn't very keen on the Christian morals and value. He knew he needed to get out of there, and quick.

When he tried to give his workplace a two week notice, they politely escorted him out of the building that day. Thankfully, Tony already had a job lined up. It was for the same money he was making but for a smaller company.

Three weeks into the job, (while we had a visitor staying with us.) Tony came home hours early and shared with me that he had lost his job. They told him that they just couldn't afford him. My husband was physically ill from the news. What were we going to do? We were totally devastated and didn't know what to do.

As time passed the medical bills kept coming along with the other bills and they started to pile up. We could not catch up on the bills; it was impossible. It wasn't that we were spending beyond our means, but we did move not too long before this all happened. So we had the extra bills for furniture and we had also just bought a new vehicle. But with the medical bills on top of everything it was just an impossible situation.

We talked to professionals in finance and we had to come to grips that the only way to fix it was to file bankruptcy. We had many friends upset with us and some even stopped talking to us over this decision. Regardless, we knew we had to take that step.

We did, however, decide to return things to the stores so that we didn't take advantage of the system. We returned our van and some of the furniture. That was a very hard time for me. I would go down to my office in the basement and sit in there with Anthony and talk on the phone with my mom so I wouldn't hear the men upstairs taking away part of my home. We even parked the van down the street to pick it up. It was a sad time for us. It broke our hearts that we had to go that venue when others are there taking advantage of the system.

You know what? We lived through it. God sent people all the time to bless us with their generosity. It is kind of funny looking back on some of the times back then. God even told these people to do it anonymously because of how we were feeling. He knew we wouldn't be able to take it from some of the people.

I would find money in envelopes taped to my door; I even had one taped to the door of a class at church. No one ever signed them. They may have notes in them, but no one would claim who they were. That is so God. We always had groceries in the fridge. It may not have been as much as we were used to, but it was sufficient. We did get to keep the roof over our heads. It did not have all the furniture in it anymore, but it was protection from the environment. God gives us what we need. And I am able to hold my head up high because God is faithful and He is my refuge.

Prayer: Lord, Your grace is sufficient for me. I praise You, Lord, for You are my rock and salvation! Thank You for providing for me and my family. Thank You for sending my family and me people that truly care and want to help us through the love of You. Bless these faithful servants for I know that they have blessed me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

Get out your “thank-you” cards or some pretty stationary and thank those who have done great deeds for you. Bless them with thanksgiving for being a good and faithful servant in Jesus’ name. Let someone know that you thank God for them.

Blessing someone else makes you feel all the more blessed.

Only Trust Him

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Proverbs 3: 5-6

When we truly trust in God wholeheartedly, He will be faithful. To depend on our own intelligence and emotions is dangerous. God's ways are perplexing but when we put our own ways up against His, ours is never enough. We may not ever understand His ways, but we will always be able to trust Him.

Even if we take in all the information there is to learn and gained much wisdom, it will still not be enough. We need to trust God's higher ways. To trust the Lord you have to accept Him. This doesn't mean just a nod of acknowledgment, it means you need to have an intimate relationship with Him and acquire knowledge of our Lord. When one does this, they can see that God does make their paths straight. Not just by guiding them, but by removing the potholes and making the road of life smoother. And in turn, bring the follower to his/her chosen purpose.

This doesn't mean that you will be free from all pain and trials. Without those, you would not learn and grow. So in essence, those of us who follow His ways will have a less difficult life.

Prayer: Thank You, Abba , for being my guide, my refuge and my strength. I pray that I stay focused on Your ways and not my own. Lord, I do love You with all my heart and I thirst for Your Word. Keep me thirsty and yearning for Your Word and Your presence. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

Spirit Builder

Turn up the worship music and dance! Praise His holy name! Love on Him. Adore Him. Declare His name and acknowledge His power and grace! Thank Him for everything He has done in your life and everything He is about to do. Don't be afraid. It doesn't take skill, it doesn't take magical words; you don't even have to know what to do with your body. This is just you and God talking heart to heart and you absolutely pouring yourself into His arms. Let yourself go with the words of the worship music.

He is worthy to be praised!

Acknowledgements

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