

Walking with God *in the* Season of Motherhood



An Eleven-Week Devotional Bible Study



Melissa B. Kruger

Praise for
Walking with God in the Season of Motherhood

“In this interactive study Melissa Kruger takes moms, with all our insecurities and inconsistencies and uncertainties, to Scripture, where we find wisdom, encouragement, instruction, correction, and, best of all, grace.”

—NANCY GUTHRIE, author of *One Year of Dinner Table Devotions and Discussion Starters*

“During the busy days of motherhood, getting into the Bible can be difficult. *Walking with God in the Season of Motherhood* is a perfect Bible study tool that equips and instructs us from the Word of God with encouragement specifically geared to a mother’s heart. Reading Melissa Kruger’s words will leave you deeply encouraged and challenged without being overwhelmed.”

—TRILLIA NEWBELL, author of *Fear and Faith: Finding the Peace Your Heart Craves* and *United: Captured by God’s Vision for Diversity*

“I speak with the authority of a mom who has investigated paths that led nowhere. Moms don’t need good advice for choosing the best path based on collaborative best practices. What moms need most is to know and be known by the One who said that He is ‘the way and the truth and the life.’ This Bible study is Christ centered and thoroughly encouraging; make the most of it by diving into Scripture with some of your friends.”

—GLORIA FURMAN, author of *Glimpses of Grace* and *Treasuring Christ When Your Hands Are Full*

“This book is like sitting down for an extended mentoring session with an experienced mother who warmly shares her world and her love for the Lord Jesus. Melissa Kruger shows how she has grounded her mothering in Scripture—and encourages others to do the same. Through a series of topics both practical and theological, she keeps her promise to ‘walk alongside you as you walk with God in the season of motherhood.’”

—KATHLEEN B. NIELSON, director of women’s initiatives for the Gospel Coalition and author of *Bible Study: Following the Ways of the Word*

“This book will be a lifeline for first-time mothers who are feeling their way in their new calling. But it is equally important for the rest of us mothers and even for grandmothers. Each day’s study uses substantive scriptures and soul-searching questions to reorient busy mothers toward walking with God in the mundane moments. With a singular focus on the riches of God’s Word, Melissa Kruger gently helps mothers in all circumstances to step beyond the feeding-schooling-vaccinating-diapering wars into something so much bigger: a life defined by—and dependent on—the glorious call of Christ.”

—MEGAN HILL, writer for *Her.meneutics* and the Gospel Coalition
and an editorial board member for *Christianity Today*

“Titus 2 calls older women to train younger women to love their children. In this Bible study Melissa Kruger obeys the Titus mandate. But she does more. She gives the church a practical, gospel-focused resource for older women to disciple younger women in the high calling of motherhood.”

—SUSAN HUNT, wife of a retired pastor, mother, grandmother,
and author of several books for women and children

“Melissa Kruger is a rare find as a friend and mentor to moms! In her devotional Bible study, she walks moms through eleven weeks of daily reflections that will shape a busy mom’s heart to trust in God. Along the way she shares wisdom and tips from her own experience. Key memory verses, certain to transform hearts, are given for both moms and their children. I warmly recommend this devotional study for a mom’s personal reading and for older women wanting to guide younger moms.”

—MARGARET KÖSTENBERGER, ThD, adjunct Professor of Women’s
Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and coauthor
of *God’s Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey*

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WATERBROOK
P R E S S

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For Angela

Jack and Caleb are blessed to have you as a mother.

I am blessed to have you as a friend.

and

For my parents, Bob and Anita Bryan

Thank you for making home such a wonderful place to be.

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✿ Introduction ✿

A Mom's Deepest Need

Yesterday morning I came downstairs to a feast of chocolate-chip pancakes, scrambled eggs, Krispy Kreme doughnuts, and hot tea. Streamers graced the doorways, smiling faces greeted me, and my children exclaimed, “Happy Mother’s Day!” I felt a bit like a queen as they presented me with cards covered in tender words and sweet pictures. My heart was full of joy, and I thanked God for the privilege of being a mother to each of my children.

Less than twenty-four hours earlier, in the exact same kitchen, a different sort of exclamation had broken forth. It was a busy afternoon with school projects to complete, sporting events to attend, and laundry to fold. Everyone had needs and they all turned to me. Like a life-size version of whack-a-mole, as soon as I addressed one request, another surfaced. After hours of juggling demands, my patience flew out the window. In deep frustration I exclaimed, “Everyone STOP saying the word *Mommy!*” At that moment motherhood felt less like a privilege and more like working at a twenty-four-hour convenience store.

I would guess that, like mine, your experience in motherhood is full of moments of delight and moments of exhaustion. Some days there is nothing we would rather do than spend time with our children. Other days we are desperate to escape to a desert island. Some days we feel like the best of mothers. Other days we feel like the greatest failures.

More than anything else in my life, motherhood has exposed my need for grace. Complaints flow too freely from my lips. Affection for my children can transform into anxious fear and worry. I can despair in my failure and become prideful in my success.

I am not as patient as I dreamed I would be. Without God's grace even my love for my children can be eclipsed by love for myself.

In the midst of my weaknesses, I need the soul-strengthening refreshment that can come only from time spent with Jesus. I need reminders of His love for me so that I can love my children well. I need to know that He is in control when my life feels like it is spinning out of control. I need the power of His promises to provide peace for my anxious heart.

In my earliest days of mothering, I found these needs difficult to prioritize in the midst of sleepless nights, overflowing laundry, and busy schedules. Some days I felt too worn-out to know where to begin. Other days I struggled to apply the truths I was learning from the Bible to practical challenges, such as dealing with my toddler's tantrum. I wanted someone to take me by the hand, point me back to the Word, remind me of its precious truth, and help me apply it to my life as a mom.

I desired a study that would allow me to dig deeper into God's Word and encourage me as a mother. I found many excellent books on parenting and just as many solid Bible studies. However, I failed to find a Bible study that intersected who I was as a believer with the role I had been given as a mother. So I muddled through with the resources I could find, but I longed for something that would help me walk with God in the season of motherhood.

Shortly after I moved to Charlotte, a friend recommended a baby-sitter. Angela soon became my daughter's favorite sitter and one of my closest friends. Eventually she joined our church, came to Bible study in our home, and went to seminary. We met together regularly for prayer and spent countless hours sharing in ministry pursuits.

Throughout her single years Angela delighted in my children. She was a constant figure in their lives, and every time she came to the door, their faces lit up with glee. "Miss Angela, Miss Angela!" they would cry from upstairs as soon as they heard her voice. She richly blessed our family with her love and laughter.

Soon after my youngest child had passed the toddler stage, Angela met and married a wonderful man. The following year we were eating ice cream, and she told me it tasted funny. I remembered many things tasting off during each of my pregnancies, so I excitedly asked, "Are you pregnant?" She didn't know for sure at that moment, but she went home that evening and took a test. It was positive! I was thrilled for my friend.

Over the next few months, I prayed for Angela as she prepared for this new season of life. One morning I realized what I wanted to give her as a gift—the one thing I had longed for as a mother. I decided to write a Bible study for her that would keep her daily

in the Word and encourage her in this new role. That morning as I sat before the Lord in prayer, the outline of this study came to mind. As I wrote the study, I began to realize it was as much for me as it was for her. As a mother of older children, I need time with Jesus just as much now as I did when I was nursing a baby.

Wherever you are on your journey, whether parenting a toddler or a teen, I pray that this book (which grew out of the study I crafted for Angela) will lead you into timeless truths about God that can encourage you as a mother. Daily time in the Word and in prayer provides the nourishment our souls need as we care for our families. The specific application for different ages may vary, but each of us needs wisdom, prayer, patience, kindness, and love as we raise our children. We never graduate from our need of His grace.

Elisabeth Elliot once said, "A mother is a chalice, the vessel without which no human being has ever been born. She is created to be a life-bearer, cooperating with her husband and with God in the making of a child. What a solemn responsibility. What an unspeakable privilege—a vessel divinely prepared for the Master's use."¹ And yet, in this season it is easy to become so consumed with the *doing* that we forget to reflect and think about who we are becoming as we raise our children. As we pour out loving devotion to our families, it is vital that we find refreshment for our own souls.

The goal of this study is not necessarily to figure out specific parenting techniques or strategies but to walk with the Lord in the busy season of motherhood and let His presence infuse and shape our lives. We will consider various truths about God and contemplate how growing to be more like Christ influences our child. The hope is to have God impact our own lives in such a way that His imprint on our hearts makes a lasting impression on our children. If we yearn for children who take their needs to God in prayer, it is important that we increasingly become women of prayer. If we want thankful children, we begin by cultivating our own thankfulness. If we want peaceful, hopeful, kind, and compassionate children, it is essential that we grow in these graces ourselves. In the beauty of God's design, He is in the process of parenting us as we parent our children.

The first four days of each week's study focus on different passages of Scripture to deepen our understanding of God's character, His work in our lives, and how we can pass these truths on to our children. Day 5 offers a devotional thought summarizing the main themes of the week. If you are working through this study with a group, you'll find additional discussion questions at the back of the book to help make the most of your time together.

All the verses used in the study are included right here in the book. My hope is to make God's Word as accessible as possible in the midst of your daily life. You can take this study along while you sit in the carpool, nurse a baby, or wait at swim lessons. These occasions become treasured moments of your day when they are filled with God's Word. Time spent communing with the Lord can provide wisdom, refreshment, and joy to carry you through each day (Psalm 19). Doesn't that sound like just what you need as a mom?

My prayer is that you will be blessed and encouraged as we study God's Word together. May we cling tightly to Jesus at every moment, trusting in Him to give us all we need for every circumstance we face.

Thank you for letting me walk alongside you as you walk with God in the season of motherhood.

—Melissa Kruger

🌿 Week 1 🌿

Understanding Your Purpose

Walking by Faith

Day 1

All of us at various points find ourselves asking, *Am I doing anything significant with my life?* Even women who yearned for motherhood may ask, *What have I gotten myself into?* Others, with frustration, quietly wonder, *Why did I bother getting a college education when the longest book I've read in the past year is Green Eggs and Ham?* Or perhaps you find yourself suddenly alone when your youngest begins school, and you think, *What am I supposed to do now? Who am I without three little ones alongside me all day?*

At the heart of all these questions lies the foundational question: *What is my purpose?*

While motherhood brings great joy, it also ushers in great change. Your identity shifts, and many of the places where you once found significance are no longer available to you. Women who confidently solve problems in their place of employment find themselves completely shocked when they have no idea how to calm their crying child.

And the changes don't come only on the front end. As our children grow and change, we move from being the mother of an infant, to the mother of a toddler, to the mother of multiple children, to the mother of school-age children, to the mother of teenagers, to the mother of college students and beyond. Our roles shift with each stage, and we need purpose to stabilize our progress.

Understanding our larger purpose in life sets the foundation for our specific calling as mothers. In truth, understanding the former will be the basis for what we conclude about the latter. While it may seem this first lesson has *nothing* to do with motherhood, stay with me! I promise we will get there.

The Westminster Catechism² gives a succinct and valuable answer to the question of purpose. It declares, “Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever.”

Over the next two days, we will consider Bible passages that support this overarching purpose for each of us. Let’s start at the very beginning, observing how the story of Creation helps to define our purpose both as people and as mothers.

1. Read **Genesis 1:26–27** and answer the questions that follow.

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

- a. How are humans different from the rest of God’s creation?

- b. Why do you think it glorifies God when we look and act like Him?

- c. How do parents respond to seeing their image reflected in their children in physical characteristics, shared interests, or similar personalities?

While all of creation glorifies God’s majesty, creativity, and power, God took special care in fashioning humans. We are unique and significant in all of creation because we were made in the image of God. Just as parents delight when they see characteristics of themselves in their children, God loves us in an exceptional way because we bear His image. You are of great worth to the Father!

5. As you reflect on this psalm, what are some specific ways you seek to worship God in your life?

6. How would you describe your current experience of God? Circle the word(s) that best describe how you feel about God today:

Distrustful, Cold, Fearful, Indifferent, Unsure

Affectionate, Close, Warm, Loving, Thankful

What other words would you add to your list?

7. If you were to write your statement of purpose up to this point, what would you say has been your chief goal in life? What have you spent your life working toward?

8. What would it look like for you today to simplify your goal to “glorify God and enjoy Him”? How would that add meaning to your day? How might it change the way you spend your time?

My intent today has been to highlight two life-changing truths as we begin this study:

- You are made in the image of God, so you are the most treasured aspect of His creation.
- You are called to an amazing life purpose: to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

I encourage you to meditate on the importance of these truths today. Every human has worth and dignity because he or she is made in the image of God. People from every country and culture understand that human life has innate value. Even those who fail to acknowledge God understand the difference between a human life and that of a mosquito. However, only the Bible explains the reason humanity is special and unique in all creation. Both you and your child are made to reflect the glory of God. There is no higher calling.

Understanding our God-given purpose directs our hopes as mothers. As we walk in fellowship with God, He breathes life into all our relationships. Delighting in our relationship with God is the first step toward embracing and enjoying our role as mothers.

Close your time today with prayer. Ask God to show you His purpose for you, both as a woman and as a mother. Pray that you would sense a new and vibrant enjoyment of Him and that whatever you do, whether in word or in deed, it would be for His glory.

Day 2

We began our study considering God's purpose for our lives. Today we will contemplate our struggle and inability to fulfill His purpose. If we are created in God's image, why do we so often fail to reflect His goodness, love, and mercy? Why do we struggle with anger, discontentment, and impatience? To help us answer these questions, let's consider the overarching story of the Bible.

The Bible essentially tells the story of Creation, the Fall, and redemption. God created a perfect world with man and woman being made in His image, the pinnacle of His creation. Everything was good. However, in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve listened to the deceptive words of the serpent (Satan) and chose to eat of the forbidden fruit. Adam's decision to disobey God is what's known as the fall of man. When the truth of God was exchanged for a lie, we became broken, no longer perfectly reflecting the God who created us.

Even as God punished Adam and Eve for their disobedience, He extended mercy. In the midst of the brokenness, He sowed the seeds of redemption. God promised that a Son would come and crush the Serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). The entire Old Testament is a picture of God's people waiting and longing for this Redeemer. While mankind struggled with sin, God raised up prophets, priests, and kings, all as shadows of the One who would come in the fullness of time and embody all three roles. Christ is our Prophet who speaks the words of His Father, our Priest who intercedes on our behalf, and our King who ushers in a new kingdom of redemption. His kingdom is ruled not by law but by grace. In His life Christ fully met all the righteous requirements of the law, and through His death He paid the penalty for sin that each of us rightly earned. By the power of His resurrection, we also can overcome death and live for eternity.

Romans 3:23–24 sums up the story: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

This is the gospel! It is good news indeed. Only in Jesus can our broken reflection be restored to rightly glorify God. The following verses show our need for Jesus and how we can walk in life-giving fellowship with Him.

1. Read **Ephesians 2:1–10**.

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- a. How do you see the effects of the Fall in verses 1–3? In what ways are we described in those verses?

- b. Why did God make us alive in Christ (verses 4–5)?

- c. How is a person saved from sin and death (verses 8–9)? See also Acts 16:30–32 and John 3:16.

- d. What is the effect of our salvation on how we live our lives (verse 10)?

2. Read **Romans 5:1–2**.

¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

What role does faith play in our relationship with God?

Yesterday we examined our ultimate purpose in life: to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The reality is that we are incapable of either one until we believe in Jesus by faith. And faith is a gift only God can bestow. We ask Him for it. Then it is by faith we can

walk with God and can live by His Spirit. By faith we are transformed daily to look more and more like Jesus.

I know that this purpose is often difficult to remember in the daily stresses of life and various tasks of mothering. In the midst of floors to mop and dinner to prepare, you may be asking, “*How* do I glorify God and enjoy Him?” The answer forms our outline for study in the weeks to come.

We grow in our enjoyment of God by abiding in the Word (Week 2) and prayer (Week 3). Finding daily time for these two key elements requires us to plan and order our priorities well (Week 4). As we abide in Jesus, He changes us from the inside out. The next six chapters deal with the fruit of His Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) at work in our hearts and how the overflow of these virtues impacts our children. The final chapter explores our struggle with perfectionism and our continual need for God’s grace.

We often evaluate ourselves by what we do (creative birthday parties, organized house, healthy lunches, etc.), which can propel us to find our worth and significance in these pursuits. Thankfully, the Bible simplifies life by encouraging us to know and love Jesus with all of our heart, soul, and strength. I have found that as I concentrate on what is most important, everything else somehow seems less important. My greatest hope is to be a mother who loves Jesus with a deep and abiding affection that joyfully overflows to my children. To succeed in this, I desperately need time with Him each day.

Take a moment to consider your own walk with God:

- How did you come to faith?
- In what ways has your faith grown throughout the years?
- Where are you today in your relationship with God?
- Do you need to rededicate your heart to walking with the Lord today or for the first time come to Him, believing in faith?

Prayerfully seek the Lord, asking Him to grow your faith over the course of these weeks we will spend together in His Word.

Day 3

Have you ever noticed how children love to dress up and act like their parents? Perhaps your teenage son cheers for the same basketball team as his dad. Or maybe your young daughter walks around with a purse on her arm and a plastic phone at her ear, talking excitedly to her imaginary friend. I remember my three-year-old daughter, soon after the

birth of our second baby, picking up her doll and lovingly stroking the doll's head, as well as taking her baby for walks around the house in her stroller. She observed all the ways I cared for her little brother and imitated that care for her baby doll.

Our children eagerly soak up the example we put before them.

God fashioned the family to be the first place we learn about the world. Parents teach us how to walk, how to talk, how to dress, what foods to eat, and how to express our emotions. From the moment we bring a child home, we understand our parental responsibility to care for his or her physical and emotional well-being. We are also instructed by God to give our children a strong spiritual foundation, as you'll see in our verses for today. From our lips they will learn their first truths about God, and from our actions they will observe what it means to follow Him.

God knows the powerful impact that parents have on a child's spiritual formation, so He gave us specific commands to encourage and direct our efforts. We began the week looking at the primary purpose God has for our lives. Today we will observe how our pursuit of that purpose contributes to the spiritual growth of our children.

1. Read **Deuteronomy 6:4–9**.

⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

- a. What are the first two commands given in verses 5 and 6? How do these verses speak to both enjoying God and glorifying Him?

- b. What commands are given regarding children in this passage? List all the opportunities we have to teach our children each day.
2. Consider how an impression is made. If you emboss your address on an envelope or use a wax seal, you have made an impression. The stamp you use to emboss will faithfully replicate whatever is true of the stamp. How do your children naturally replicate you? What are some examples of your children loving what you love?
3. Why do you think God first calls us to a deep love for Himself before He commands us to train our children?
4. How can you grow your love for the Lord this week in heart, mind, habits, and attitudes? What is one new way you can bring His Word into your home?

In the passage we just read, Moses began by commanding the Israelites to develop a deep affection for the Lord. He wanted their love for God to be an all-consuming passion: “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5). Zeal is contagious. A mother who loves the Lord radiates an abiding joy to her children. Our affection for God motivates us to spend time daily in His Word, which equips us with spiritual treasures to pass on to our children.

Moses also instructed the Israelites to teach their children about God along the way, at every part of the day. While it is wise to plan specific times for family devotions, our love for God is to overflow into whatever we do. Opportunities to speak with our children about God come as we drive to the store, wait at the bus stop, and tuck them in at night. When we teach truths about God to our children, we bless them with an inheritance that will accompany them throughout life.

Two examples in Scripture further illustrate the importance of teaching our children about God. As you read the following passages, consider the effects of training children from a young age.

5. Read **Psalm 78:1–7**.

¹O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. ²I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old— ³what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. ⁴We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. ⁵He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, ⁶so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. ⁷Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

a. What did the psalmist vow to teach his children?

b. Why is it so important? (See verses 5 and 7.)

6. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul gave us a tiny glimpse into the impact that Timothy's mother (Eunice) and grandmother (Lois) had on his faith. Read the following verses to see what you can learn.

I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. (2 Timothy 1:5)

¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:14–15)

- a. In whom did Timothy first observe faith in God?
 - b. When did Timothy begin to learn from the Bible?
 - c. What effect did learning the Bible have on Timothy's faith?
7. What are small moments and creative ways you can begin to spiritually nurture your children and teach them the Bible?

The example of Eunice and Lois demonstrates the powerful influence of motherly (and grandmotherly) affection for Jesus. The faith of these two women overflowed into Timothy's life and was used to bring him into relationship with Christ. While our faith

does not have the power to save our children, the Lord can use it to draw them to Himself.

Acts 16 tells us that Timothy's mother was a Jewish woman who believed in Christ. Even though Timothy's father was a Greek who did not believe, she faithfully trained her son in faith from his early childhood. Timothy went on to be a pastor and leader in the church. God also faithfully provided Timothy with a spiritual father, Paul.

If you are a single mother, or if your husband is not a believer, and you are carrying the weight of spiritual training for your family, I hope this example will encourage you to believe that the Lord can use your faith in mighty ways to impact your children. Pray that God would provide fatherly figures to help mentor and disciple them. The beauty of the church is that God provides within the spiritual family what is at times missing in the biological family.

Whatever your family situation, pray that your love for God would make an impression on your children. Pray that they would come to know Jesus from an early age and that God would use them to glorify His name. May the simplest gifts from His generous hand bring you great enjoyment of God today!

Day 4

Have you ever experienced the uncomfortable feeling that your children were not welcome? It might have been at a restaurant, on an airplane, or in a store when someone gave you that *look*. In an instant you realized your child was viewed as a problem. The person may have worried that your child would spread germs, act in an unruly manner, scream loudly, or in some other way cause a disturbance. A sigh or a glance can communicate a great deal regarding someone's attitude toward the presence of children.

It is particularly disheartening for this type of situation to happen in a church context. My friend Erica recounted for me her experience of visiting a large church in town for the first time. She and her husband decided to forgo putting her three-year-old in the nursery because they wanted to visit the church a few times before placing him in a new environment. When their family entered the auditorium, Erica told the ushers the child would be staying with her in the service. She was grateful to be seated near the back, because she did not want to disturb anyone.

However, after the service began (and as her child was sitting quietly beside her), Erica felt a tap on her shoulder. An usher stood in the aisle, beckoning them to follow him out of the service. Her child had not created any sort of disturbance, but now

everyone was looking as they stood up and shuffled past others to make their way out of the auditorium. Essentially, they were informed that children were not welcome in the service. They would need to put him in the nursery or miss church that morning. It's not surprising that they never returned to that church!

Today we are going to observe Jesus's response when little children were brought to Him. We will also observe the response of His disciples. As you read this story, I hope you will be motivated to faithfully do all you can to bring your children to Jesus, even when obstacles arise.

1. Read **Mark 10:1, 13–16**.

¹Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them. . . . ¹³People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

- a. Describe the situation in which people were bringing their children to Jesus.

- b. How did the disciples respond to the parents and their children?

- c. How did Jesus respond to the disciples?

- d. How did Jesus respond to the children?

5. How do you think your child would answer if you asked, “What is my greatest hope for you?”

I hope this passage encourages you as it does me. Jesus wants us to bring our children into His presence! While the world may view children with impatience or annoyance, Jesus views young ones with tenderness and kindness. He welcomes us all and bids us to come to Him.

The work you do within your home is of great significance. As a pastor once said, “All should realize the sublime idea that their houses are the schools for eternity; their children the scholars; themselves the teachers; and evangelical religion the lesson.”³ Never doubt that your labors matter. The mundane moments of your day become sacred when viewed with a right understanding of your calling.

While none of us can give our faith to our children, we can entrust all our labors and hopes to the Lord, praying that He will work to bring forth the fruit of faith in our children. I find it helpful to use passages of Scripture to pray for my children. As you finish your lesson for today, you may want to use the following prayer of Paul to guide you in boldly asking the Lord to do great things:

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9–11)

Day 5: Walking Motherhood Together

Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

—John 6:28–29, ESV

My first time traveling with an infant came soon after our older daughter’s birth. We were living in Edinburgh, Scotland, and we wanted to come back to the States for Christmas. Since Emma was born late in the fall, we had to get her passport photo taken when she was just one week old. We then had to file all the paperwork for an American citizen born abroad in order to apply for the passport.

We prepared for the long journey with a six-week-old baby. We packed bottles of formula in case my milk supply went low. We had extra changes of clothes in case of spit up or runny diapers. We then took our first two-hour flight from Edinburgh to Amsterdam. After a layover we boarded a plane for the nine-hour flight to Detroit.

Our already-long day turned out to be much longer than planned. Once we arrived in Detroit, we sat aboard the flight for another two hours (all the time holding little Emma in my arms!) because of a fire in the international terminal. Due to the delay we missed our connecting flight to Raleigh and had to spend the night in a nearby hotel. The next morning we took a taxi back to the airport and boarded our plane to North Carolina. In the weeks leading up to the trip, we had slept only in few-hour increments, and now the journey had been much more difficult than we expected. Often during the ordeal my husband and I looked at each other with the unspoken question, *Is all of this worth it?*

Everything changed the moment I walked into my parents’ home. While my mom had come to help me just after Emma’s birth, my father had not met his new granddaughter. Once I placed my daughter in my dad’s lap and experienced the joy of seeing the two of them together, I knew right away that the relationship made the journey worth the struggle.

Looking back two thousand years, I wonder about the challenges facing those parents in Judea who journeyed to bring their children to Jesus. While the paintings that hang in church nurseries always represent this as a peaceful scene, I have a feeling it was

much more complicated. Surely as they traveled to get their children to Jesus, there were diapers that needed changing, hungry mouths to feed (and not a Chick-fil-A in sight), arguments, whining, dirty hands and feet, tired children, exhausted parents, and a myriad of other obstacles. It would not have been an easy journey.

Once they arrived, the disciples *rebuked* the parents for bringing their children to Jesus. Can you imagine their feelings after all their hard work to get the children to Him? Thankfully, Jesus welcomed the children saying, “Let the children come to me,” and He took them in His arms, and He blessed them.

In His words we have an invitation to bring our children to Jesus. We are not told that the journey will be easy, but we are told that it is the way of blessing. Today, in the midst of the dirty dishes, busy schedules, and mouths to feed, we are on a journey with our children. We may be tempted to follow the side roads of academic or athletic success at the expense of biblical training. We may be distracted by the desire that our children bring us glory as parents rather than glorify God. We may detour from our true path, lured by the hope that they achieve well-paying jobs or fame in the world.

However, only one road leads to the Source of lasting joy. Consider what journey you are setting your child on in life. Jesus promised, “I have come that they may have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10). As you go through your day, you are taking your child somewhere. Make sure it is to Jesus. Whatever the age of your children, whatever the stage of your mothering, you can begin today to set a course for Jesus. One of my favorite articles on mothering was written in the eighteen hundreds by a pastor named John James. He spent months preaching on the importance of womanhood, and the sermons were collected in a book titled *Female Piety*. Within this book is a chapter called “To Young Mothers” that I find both thought provoking and encouraging. Here is his summation of a mother’s purpose:

And now, to sum up all, consider—

A mother’s charge—an immortal creature.

A mother’s duty—to train him up for God, heaven and eternity.

A mother’s dignity—to educate the family of the Almighty Creator of
the universe.

A mother’s difficulty—to raise a fallen sinful creature to holiness and
virtue.

A mother’s encouragement—the promise of Divine grace to assist her in
her momentous duties.

A mother's relief—to bear the burden of her cares to God in prayer.

A mother's hope—to meet her child in glory everlasting, and spend eternal ages of delight with him before the throne of God and the Lamb.⁴

Close your time with prayer, asking God to create within you a renewed sense of purpose and direction. Pray that He would lead you to a deep enjoyment of Jesus and allow your life to glorify God in all things. Just as the soft wax of a letter seal bears the imprint of the stamp, ask that the Lord would use your affection for Jesus to make a deep impression on your children, that their hearts would be soft wax, shaped by His divine purpose.

As you pray, also ask God to guide you regarding two specific questions:

- *How can I enjoy and glorify You more this week?*
- *What is one tangible way I can bring my child to Jesus this week?*

May the Lord strengthen and encourage you in your journey with Him.



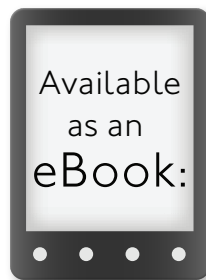
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