

# Loving the Little Years

MOTHERHOOD IN THE TRENCHES

*Qeen*

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To Luke  
on whose shoulders we all ride



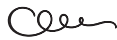
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# Welcome to My Circus



If there is anything I have learned in the course of my fast and furious mothering journey, it is that there is only one thing in my entire life that must be organized. The kids can be running like a bunch of hooligans through a house that appears to be at the bottom of a toaster, and yet, if organization and order can still be found in my attitude, we are doing well. But if my attitude falters, even in the midst of external order, so does everything else.

It is one thing to state this casually, another to believe it, and yet quite another to keep it in sight when you most need to. And if you have small children like I do, you need to keep it in mind all the time.

The following is a loose collection of thoughts on mothering young children—for when you are motivated, for when you are discouraged, for the times when discipline seems fruitless, and for when you are just plain

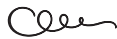
old tired. Think of this as organizational tools for a mother's attitude. A lot of the time all you need is a good old perspective adjustment and a label.

This is not a tender reminiscence from someone who had children so long ago that she only remembers the sweet parts. I do not have a foggy, precious perspective on mothering little ones. My children do not sit on monogrammed picnic blankets in coordinated outfits while I bring them nutritious snacks on a silver tray. You are more likely to find me putting an end to them pulling each other around at breakneck speeds on a tablecloth tied to a jump rope, or seriously counseling someone who has part of a toilet paper tube taped to their nose. At the time of writing this, I have three children in diapers, and I can recognize the sound of hundreds of toothpicks being dumped out in the hall. Sure, I am looking back in retrospect on nursing the twins in the park with a blanket between my teeth, but it wasn't so long ago that I have forgotten about the overheated kind of specialness of it.

I didn't write this book because mothering little ones is easy for me. I wrote it because it isn't. I know that this is a hard job, because I am right here in the middle of it. I know you need encouragement every day, because I do too.



## In the Rock Tumbler



I remember a time when I used to be much godlier. It was sometime in junior high and my room was clean. It must have been beautiful weather outside because the lighting was very nice in my room where I was reading my Bible every day and feeling really good. It was quite clear to me that my sanctification was progressing very well. As the feeling wore off, I remember looking back to that time as a high point. That was really living the Christian life.

The truth is my Christian life then was like a rock being refined by a slow river in a quiet place. It wasn't as though I wasn't growing spiritually, but my word! So easily! And so little!

But God took me out of that life and threw me into the rock tumbler. Here, it is not so easy to feel godly, because we spend our days crashing into each other and actually getting our problems addressed. Here there is

very little time for quiet reflection. I do a lot of on-the-job failure and correction. Repenting and forgiving. Laughing. Lots and lots of laughing. Because if there is anything that life in the rock tumbler will teach you, it is that there is no room to take yourself seriously. Like trying to strike “cool” poses on a rug that someone is continually pulling out from under you, self-seriousness in mothering is totally pointless and probably painful!

The opportunities for growth and refinement abound here—but you have to be willing. You have to open your heart to the tumble. As you deal with your children, deal with yourself always and first. This is what it looks like and feels like to walk with God, as a mother.

God treats us with great kindness as we fail daily. He takes the long view of our sin—knowing that every time we fail and repent, we grow in our walk with Him. It is easy for us to accept this, because our sins are, well, ours.

But our children sin against us, annoy us, and mess up our stuff. We want to hold it against them, complain about them (if only to ourselves), and feel put upon by their sin. We have a much harder time accepting that every failure from them is a wonderful opportunity for repentance and growth and not an opportunity for us to exact penance.

It is no abstract thing—the state of your heart is the state of your home. You cannot harbor resentment secretly toward your children and expect their hearts to be submissive and tender. You cannot be greedy

with your time and expect them to share their toys. And perhaps most importantly, you cannot resist your opportunities to be corrected by God and expect them to receive correction from you.

God has given us the job of teaching His law and demonstrating His grace. We are to be guides to our children as they learn to walk with God.

Sin is just a fact of life. It is the way we deal with it that changes ours.