

**A MILLION
TINY
MOMENTS**

**EMILY A. JENSEN &
LAURA WIFLER**



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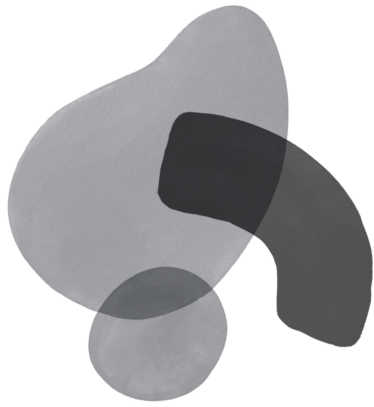
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INTRODUCTION

Motherhood is lived in a million tiny moments. A moment with hot coffee in our favorite chair before rising to tend to a newborn's cry. A moment to admire the laughter among siblings. A moment to sneak a square of chocolate in the pantry or to laugh at an eight-year-old's joke. Like an old-fashioned photo reel, the moments flash by in our minds: holding her against your skin for the first time, sharing the same slide at the park, rocking him in that old chair, seeing her blow out five candles on the cake. The highlights hit us like little light beams, and the moments meld together to become the spectacularly bright thing we know as motherhood.

But not every moment is one we want to remember. Not every moment is good or joyful, silly or fun, nostalgic or mundane. Some of them are just plain hard. Or sad. Or painful. A moment of sobbing after a trip to the doctor. A moment of yelling after losing our cool from all the running and the noise. A moment of panic after an unexpected phone call. A moment of rumination and shame while we lie in bed and recount the day. All of us find moments of darkness speckled in among the light beams of motherhood, and we're not always sure what to do with them.

Over a decade into motherhood, we (Emily and Laura) have lived our own montage of moments, and we understand how precious, varied, and complex they are. How some of them feel as if they are going to drag on forever (we're looking at you, "little years") and some of them feel as if they are

flying by too fast. (Is ten the perfect childhood age? Seems pretty close!) And something we've learned is that every one of those moments—good, bad, or in between—matters.

We don't say this to give you a guilt trip or one more thing you need to worry about trying to maximize, capture, or enjoy. (Moms have plenty of that!) No, it's not as if *every single second* is high-stakes and you have to get it right—or else. But every moment matters because you matter. And your children matter. And all the people who you come in contact with—for that matter—matter! The moments of your motherhood are important because God knew every one of them before you were born (Psalm 139:16). They matter because you have a sacred mission and purpose to love God, worship and serve him above all else, and love others (Matthew 28:19-20; Isaiah 43:7). They matter because if you love God and follow him, your steps are established by God (Proverbs 16:9). He looks over all the earth, and nothing escapes his notice or control (Job 28:24). They matter because God says they matter (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Feel a little heady and overwhelming? It takes time to understand our lives through this lens, but it's not impossible. It takes growth and practice. But if *we* can do it, *you* can do it too. Over the years, our heart and mission for moms have never changed. This book has one primary goal: to point moms to look beyond their moments to the One who holds all your moments.

We want you to know that you were created good, as God's image-bearer.

But because of the Fall, things in life and motherhood (and especially in our own hearts) won't always be good, understandable, or honor God. But there's good news for all of us—when we recognize our own inabilities and insufficiencies and put our faith in Jesus Christ, trusting him as our Lord and Savior, we have new life, new hope, and new purpose. This, all of this, is the gospel. Through it, our moments take on a whole different meaning, and that changes everything. Because in Christ, we're not just living for peace and quiet, surviving until becoming empty-nesters, or looking back at nostalgic memories, our kids' special awards, or epic family vacations (though all of those things are probably awesome). We're living for Christ himself.

Mom, the million tiny moments that make up your motherhood are given to you by God for his glory and your ultimate good (Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:4-6). There is no moment outside of his sovereign control. No moment too small to matter. No moment too difficult or shameful. The gospel matters for each and every one of them. God wants you to turn from your sin and trust in Christ for eternal life. And when you do that, the meaning behind the million tiny moments of motherhood changes. Now they aren't just lived for the momentary happiness they can provide—they are lived for Jesus. You live a risen motherhood.

What you'll find in these pages is the narrative of two imperfect moms working out how to live for Jesus in every moment of motherhood. And we hope that it inspires and encourages you to do the same.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

In the following pages, you'll read a curated, edited, and updated collection of writings we've done over the years on the topic of motherhood. These entries were written during our time at Risen Motherhood, a ministry we cofounded to help moms understand what it means to live for God and follow him. Over the years at that ministry, we spoke and wrote countless words. Some of these were published on social media, some on our website, some in emails or as part of a download. We believe many of these writings hold treasures for moms beyond the life of the ministry. Had we not compiled these into a book, they would have been buried on the internet forever.

When we wrote most of these, we were moms of young children ourselves. We were wading through the little years and learning to turn our eyes to Christ in all things. Because these writings are from our hearts, they flow from our own personal experiences. This is why you'll find that topically, they aren't comprehensive. We wrote more frequently about topics that we were personally passionate about or that intersected our lives. For that reason, as an example, you'll find a few selections on disability and none on miscarriage, because both of us have a child with a disability, but neither of us have had a miscarriage.

We know we have not covered all the ways that moms can and do need practical help. Please know that even as we encourage moms to hope in Jesus and believe the truth, we don't want to brush over the many other tangible and immediate ways moms need help. If you find yourself reading these writings while you face a complex or painful situation, know that you can and should engage people in your real life and potentially seek professional help and guidance. You'll find a lot of feelings and reflections in these pieces, and in some cases, they intentionally leave you hanging so you can consider what these truths mean for your own life. Take what's helpful from each entry and leave the rest.

Finally, most of these writings are short, reflective, and feel more poetic. They don't have thesis statements and topic sentences. We chose to organize them loosely by theme, so you can read them one after the other (like a traditional book), or you can choose to search for a specific topic and reference what you need that day.

However you engage with this book, we pray it serves you.

FOR WHEN YOU ARE TIRED

Mom, you can trust in the sovereignty of God. He feeds the sparrow, causes the oak to grow, and raises the white lilies from their beds each spring. He knows your needs and will meet you where you are.

LAURA

WHEN YOU ARE WORN OUT

LAURA

Moms want to see results. We want to see something from our efforts and know we're making a difference. We want to know we're heroes in someone's story. But when all we're doing most of the day is picking up fuzz, crumbs, and toys off the floor, it can be hard to see. Our work feels very...small.

The truth is, motherhood is not small work. Yes, it is a slow process, and it's one that isn't obvious or grand to the world. But while it's hard to see in the middle of wiping counters, scrubbing stains, and picking up sidewalk chalk, our investment as mothers will yield results of eternal value. We want instant gratification—to see our lives used in one big, heroic way—but instead, God asks for our heroism to come in the form of thousands of blurred-together days: making lunches, putting on Band-Aids, and giving kisses at bedtime tuck-ins.

Moms, our labor of finding the lost shoe and reuniting it with its match

is not wasted time. That shoe is valuable work—missional work. Motherhood is about being faithful in the mundane things because we understand the bigger story we're caught up in—how we were once lost to sin and death, but we have been found and healed by the true hero, Jesus Christ. We are now instruments of God's grace, sacrifice, and perseverance, and each day, we have the privilege of reflecting him to our children.

So today, when you are feeling frazzled, alone, worn out, or just plain fed up, remember why we do this: You are not just changing diapers, scrubbing the toilet, or picking the towels up off the floor for the five hundredth time—in a million tiny moments, you are looking to the Lord and raising hearts. It's not small work. It's grand, majestic, heroic work because you're doing it in and through Christ for an eternal purpose that lasts far beyond this life.

WHEN MOTHERHOOD ISN'T WHAT YOU EXPECTED

EMILY

Have you ever imagined an ideal day of motherhood? In my imagination, the kids sleep quietly late into the morning. I have uninterrupted quiet time and at least one cup of coffee before greeting anyone. Breakfast is bountiful and received with thanksgiving. People take turns talking, and not a drop of milk falls out of place. I check everything off my list, plus I have extra time to read a book. Questions are framed politely. Everyone gets what they need by themselves. There are no surprises, and no one runs late or needs discipline. I'm in a great mood and don't struggle with impatience or discontentment. Summed up in a sentence? Everything goes right.

While each mom's ideal day looks different, most of us imagine that joy lies just on the other side of that perfect day. We think that if people were just where they were supposed to be, doing what they were supposed to be doing, we'd finally grasp joy. We determine that if we got ourselves together and did a better job of home management, meal planning, and schedule finessing, we'd find balance and experience deep happiness. Or maybe motherhood is already so far from our ideal picture because of unexpected medical challenges, long seasons of infertility or multiple miscarriages, extended-family estrangement, or marital strain—we're convinced joy is out of reach.

But if circumstances are the obstacle between us and joy, how can we grasp it? I don't know about you, but I've never had a day like the ideal one I described. Motherhood itself is a gift, and there have been many beautiful moments, but it's never long before hard things come.

Facing a less-than-ideal version of motherhood leads me down several paths, but usually not the path of joy. I'm tempted to lose hope and get cynical or crabby. I start to focus more on what I don't have instead of enjoying what I do. Maybe you don't struggle with those things, but a less-than-ideal day causes you to go into "fix-it" mode—making more lists, taking on more projects, or correcting everything that doesn't meet your standards.

I doubt any of us are on track to have our ideal day of motherhood. Even as you read this, you might be so far behind on your lists, so deep into relational conflicts or wrong reactions that you think it's impossible to recover—that all hope for joy is lost. But remember, because joy isn't found in your circumstances, it's not too far gone! Turn away from staring down your day and look to Christ himself. Let your heart swell with gratitude for how good, merciful, gracious, and steadfast he is. Think about him sitting at the right hand of God, praying for you, and have joy. Motherhood isn't perfect, but he is.

WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE A WEAK MOM

EMILY

When my first son was a toddler, I remember seeing a book with a mom laid flat on her back on the front cover. She looked exhausted and overwhelmed...*weak*. I remember scrolling by it, thinking, “I hope I never need a book like that!”

Well, fast-forward to being a mom of five (ages five and under), and somewhere in there, *it happened*. I’m not sure of the exact day, but I transformed from a “strong” mom into a “weak” mom. I started losing my patience, my energy ran low, and I saw my inability to be enough for everyone. If you were to take a picture of my heart, it looked more like the mom on the cover of that book.

There’s no question—I had a lot to learn about what it meant to care for myself well and receive the help of others in motherhood. There were many areas where I was trying to go it alone and I had unrealistic expectations for myself. But at the heart of this, I was also dealing with a question of identity.

When I thought of myself primarily as a “strong” mom, I tended to be prideful, judgmental, and convinced I had the stuff good moms were made of. But when I thought of myself primarily as a “weak” mom, I felt hopeless and buried under heaps of self-pity and condemnation.

But then I remembered—I am a mom with weaknesses and limitations, but my identity is that of a “redeemed” mom.

In Christ, it’s okay to be needy, but there is nothing left for me to earn, prove, or posture for. God sought me at my worst and put his Spirit in me so I could walk in his ways and share his love with others. And because of the wonderful freedom he purchased for me, I am able to rest in his strength and goodness.

Moms, wherever you are today—feeling strong or weak or somewhere in between—remember that if you are a follower of Christ, there is one story that defines you and one person who tells you who you truly are.

WHEN YOU HAVE A HARD DAY

LAURA

If today has been a hard day, remember, it doesn't change the truth of God's grace for you. Your purpose, your goal, your mission, is still the same. His grace is sufficient.

You love God—more than anything. You say that on the good days; now you must believe that on the hard days. His grace is sufficient.

So stand straight on your wobbly legs, and trust him as you go about your day. His grace is sufficient.

Tomorrow is a new day, and with it, light will come. Remember and believe: His grace is sufficient.

WHEN GOD DOESN'T FEEL PRESENT

LAURA

Sometimes, in the chaos of children and cooking and cleaning and errands and just generally managing a household and family, I forget why I'm doing what I'm doing. I forget who I serve. I get so focused on the here and now, I forget God and eternity. Last night, as I was cooking dinner, my husband was working late, and the kids were whining at my feet, I felt exasperated. Strung out. Overwhelmed.

And then, in the middle of it all, I stopped and sang a worship song to the Lord. Asking him to remind me of his presence.

Our homes are holy. They are places set apart for God and his work. God is not afraid of your crumb-filled kitchen floors or dirt-streaked walls. You don't have to be sitting in a church pew with a steeple overhead to worship him.

God meets you exactly where you're at. He is the God of thrown-together dinners, traffic in the carpool lane, and Magna-Tiles strewn on the living room floor. He is the God of water tables and playgrounds, drives home from work, and doctor's appointments. God is everywhere! He is in everything! He needs nothing!

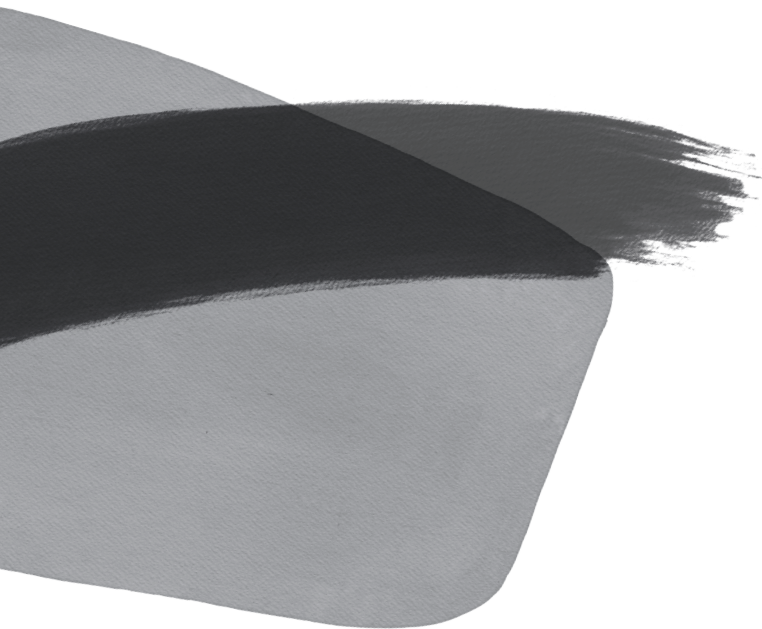
Remember that God's presence is in your home, Mom. Remember him at your family dinners, your playdates, your bedtimes, and in the middle of toddler tantrums. In the midst of the chaos in your house, slow down and see his glory. Be overcome by his presence. You have been equipped for this by the power of the Holy Spirit. God is the reason why we do what we do.

Stay focused on what matters.

WHEN THE JOB FEELS SMALL

LAURA

You carry a lot of things, Mom. You carry the diapers, you carry the wipes, you carry the 55 bowls that your kid just handed you. None of those jobs are too small, too meaningless, too mundane, or too beneath you when they're done in service to the glory of God.



FOR THE CARE OF INFANTS

EMILY

Nursery workers, grandmas, foster parents, caregivers, and (of course) mamas—listen up!

It might seem like what you're doing isn't *that* big of a deal. It might feel like *anyone* can change diapers or give bottles or rock a baby. And yes, to some extent, that's true. But you are doing so much more than *just* meeting physical needs.

When you choose to love an infant well—singing that quiet song, using that dorky voice, smiling in that silly way, reading that repetitive book, or feeding that messy snack—you are displaying God's love.

You are validating that child's God-given worth.

You are doing something humble with great impact.

You are shaping the brain and heart of a human being.

This isn't just any old work. This is kingdom work when we do it with gospel-purpose.

Each Christlike action toward that infant is like a valuable jewel being placed in the treasure chest of the heart. The real investment doesn't begin later; the riches are adding up now.

It's not for us to say whether or not that child will someday notice and accept these riches available to them in Christ, but we can certainly help lay the best possible foundation for that child to later hear and receive the gospel.

So the next time you are with that sweet infant, make the little investments and trust God to do the rest. Your love matters because it points to the greatest love they can ever experience.

WHEN YOU'RE IN A RUT

EMILY

Sometimes in motherhood, I get into a rut. Days or weeks go by, and it's hard to turn everyday conversations into moments for pointing kids to Christ. The steady rumble of rambunctious voices makes it hard to fill the home with sounds of hymns, worship music, and prayers. The busy hour before dinner leads to half-hearted meals in front of the TV. Over time, these once exceptional things become the norm.

I understand ruts because we live in the country, near gravel roads. Ruts appear where vehicles have crossed the same path over and over again, making one section of the road smooth and easy to drive on. So much so that it's actually tough to drive on the bumpy portions and they almost force the tires of the car to the well-worn path.

So when I hit ruts in motherhood, especially ones I'm not happy about, I need to recognize that I'm going to have to actively think about breaking these habits. Just like those gravel roads, our brains' neurological connections form strong pathways to the things we've always done. Change might

be bumpy for a while—but bumps aren't necessarily a sign that I'm doing something wrong.

We're women with old habits of sin learning to walk by the Spirit. We need to continually ask for the power to swerve away from the flesh and develop holy ruts. God can help us when it gets bumpy and things seem to get worse before they get better. He can hold our hands steady when discomfort sets in.

Holy ruts in motherhood fall in line with God's commands. They show a default toward patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control—especially in the small things. They make it feel harder not to pray or give thanks. These ruts develop not by sheer determination but through our abiding dependence on God's Spirit.

What ruts have you fallen into lately? Will you pray, ask, and act—going out of the rut, through the bumps, and toward a life of holiness?

WHEN HOUSEWORK FEELS POINTLESS

LAURA

It doesn't have to be just "vacuuming," "scrubbing," or "washing." When done in service to the Lord, with love and care and understanding that all is for the Lord, those old wood floors are not just floors—they're sacred ground. Hallowed. Because you are not just running a vacuum over the crumbs; you are offering worship to your God. When you as a mother recognize Christ is in all, then you are not merely "doing just a bit of housework"; you're imaging your Lord and Savior, offering a sacrifice of praise. His presence is there, right in that room. Recognize it—and you'll find the pathway to joy.

WHEN YOU ARE WEARY

EMILY

When you're weary in motherhood and you feel like it's impossible to carry on in your current circumstances, let that be like a red flag waving in your life. Notice it, acknowledge it, and don't go running to your usual means of comfort—*extra coffee, more sweets, venting sessions with friends, more clothes added to cart, binge scrolling social media, yelling at your kids, and all of those other things that provide temporary relief.*

Run to Jesus. Pray. Humble yourself, and ask him for strength, wisdom, guidance, and love for your children. See how he might guide you with Scripture and through practical means of rest, help, and endurance.

God can and will equip you with everything you need for life and godliness through the Holy Spirit.

He can be your refuge, hiding place, strength, comforter, redeemer, and faithful guide in times of need. He is just waiting for you to stop going your own way and depend on the help made available to you through the sacrifice of Christ.

Be encouraged, because if you've placed your faith in Christ, then someday your Father will welcome you into his kingdom and tell you, "Well done." This good news is meant to give you hope to keep going in the midst of today's hardships.