

Chapter 1

# Check the Third Box

DRIVE-THRU ORDERING AND MY YOUNGEST DAUGHTER are a bad combination. Brooke can do many things in life. She's an amazing, beautiful, talented, witty, kind-hearted girl. Who is amazing. I believe I might have mentioned that already. But she panics at the drive-thru box.

Even if we've talked about getting her order in mind beforehand, something always goes haywire. She takes way too long to give me her order. She changes things even after I start placing her order. She confuses the poor order taker who isn't making enough money per hour to deal with people like us.

I feel so awful, like we are breaking drive-thru rules. I know we're aggravating the people behind us. The cars aren't honking, but I can feel their stares and glares and the desire for us to hurry up. The tension mounts to where I know a honk is coming any minute now, I just know it is. I'd pull out of line and circle back around if I could, but you can't at this drive-thru.

There are poles in the ground to keep traffic flowing correctly, so once you commit to going through this drive-thru line, you are committed. Even if your daughter can't decide. Even if the line behind you now is wrapping around the building. Even if the order taker is secretly wishing you'd go away. You can't. I can't. We can't.

I sweat. And start smelling like onions. The kind of onion smell coming from a deodorant fail. Seriously. All from our drive-thru order taking too long.

I keep saying the next time it happens I'm going to look straight at her with all the love a mama tired of smelling like onions can muster up and say, "Give me your order now or I'm leaving." Just tell the girl at the box we are so sorry but we have no order so we'll be circling around to the place where we can pull out of line and then leave.

Just pull away.

Drive her home to eat dreaded leftovers. Or toast. Or nothing. Because she's got to learn this lesson!

And here's the thing that really baffles me—the drive-thru restaurant we go to most often? Her dad runs it. As in, she's been going to this place her whole life. From day one in utero she's been nourished by the homemade goods from this eating establishment. And the choices of menu items? She likes just about everything at this restaurant. I've seen her eat and enjoy many, many things on the menu. So I know that no matter what she chooses, she'll enjoy her meal.

But still she's paralyzed when it's time to order.

Why?

Because she doesn't want to pull away from that drive-thru, get a few miles down the road and a few bites into her

meal and wish she'd made a different choice. It's not that she'll think what she ordered is bad, it's just that she'll feel the tension of realizing she missed the best choice. And we girls don't like feeling we missed out. Or messed up. Or misstepped right out of what should have been or what could have been.



As I think about that frantic drive-thru frustration from her not being able to make a decision, I am challenged to be honest about my own struggles with decisions.

I exhale and some unfiltered honesty rushes in.

I struggle with decisions too. I don't want to miss out on opportunities, mess up relationships by disappointing people, or misstep right out of God's will. I struggle with keeping some sense of balance in my life. I struggle with worrying about what others think of my decisions. I struggle with wondering if my inability to do it all will make my kids wind up on a therapist's couch one day. I struggle with feeling like I can't quite figure out how other women seem to do it all. I struggle with feeling like I'm going to let God down. Descriptions ping in my head: *I'm tired. I'm distracted. I'm disappointed in myself. I feel slightly used and more than slightly used up. I'm a little overwhelmed and a lot worn down.*

These are thoughts I share only with myself. Partly because I'm a positive person and these threads of admission feel too dark. And I much prefer cheery yellow to gloomy gray. Also I hesitate to share because I can't figure out how to fix these things, so why even bring them up? In the daily sea of endless demands, I must admit I'm not doing so well. So I put pen to

paper and dare to explore this topic as an author who needs this message most of all.

This time is hard for me. Admission instead of omission.

Admitting that I sometimes need to reevaluate. A few minutes to whisper, “God, I really want to do life right. So I give and serve and love and do and sacrifice. I do it all with a happy heart, an open checkbook, a calendar dedicated to being Your girl. I study Your Word. I tuck truth in my heart and as a trembling, brave one, I determine to charge upward and forward each day.”

And yet there’s this nagging sense that something’s a bit off inside me. Someone makes a request of me that I know right away is unrealistic. My brain says no. My schedule says no. My reality says no. But my heart says yes! Then my mouth betrays my intention of saying no, as it smiles and says, “Yes, of course.”

I dread saying yes but feel powerless to say no. I dread saying yes not because I don’t love that person. I love them very much. But I dread what saying yes will do to the already-running-on-empty me.

And I keep on marching as if this is the way a Christian woman is supposed to live, as if this is the call on my life, as if this is all there is.

I misuse the two most powerful words, *yes* and *no*. I slap purpose across the face and stomp calling into the ground as I blindly live at the mercy of the requests of others that come my way each day. Every assignment feels like my assignment.

You need me? You got me. Because I’m too scared or too cowardly or too busy or too *something* to just be honest and say, “I can’t this time.”

In this great day when most women wave banners of authenticity about our pasts, we crouch back from honesty about our presents. We'll tell you all about our broken places of yesterday but don't dare admit the limitations of our today.

All the while the acid of overactivity eats holes in our souls. And from those holes leaks the cry of the unfulfilled calling that never quite happened. We said yes to so much that we missed what I call our "Best Yes" assignments—simply because we didn't heed the warning of the whispers within that subtle space.

*I'm tired. I'm distracted. I'm disappointed in myself. I feel slightly used and more than slightly used up. I'm a little overwhelmed and a lot worn down.*

We must not confuse the command to love with the disease to please. And it's not just because of the vicious cycles of people pleasing, although that's part of it. I miss Best Yes opportunities sometimes because I simply don't know they're part of the equation. I get all twisted up in making the decision to check either the Yes or No box, not realizing there is a third box that reads Best Yes.

---

*We must not confuse the command  
to love with the disease to please.*

---

What is a Best Yes, you ask. We'll unpack this throughout the book. But in its most basic form, a Best Yes is you playing your part.

At church.

At school.

At work.

At wherever you are today.

And what's so great about that? In God's plan, you've got a part to play. If you know it and believe it, you'll live it. You'll live your life making decisions with the Best Yes as your best filter. You'll be a grand display of God's Word lived out. Your undistracted love will make your faith ring true. Your wisdom will help you make decisions that will still be good tomorrow. And you'll be alive and present for all of it.

---

*A Best Yes is you playing  
your part. If you know it and  
believe it, you'll live it.*

---

Are you ready to begin asking, *What is my Best Yes?*

Me too. I just need to wrap up this little situation at the drive-thru first. Any suggestions for a stronger deodorant? I have a feeling I'm going to need that.