

The  
20  
HARDEST  
questions  
every mom faces

Dannah Gresh



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS  
EUGENE, OREGON

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Verses marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Verses marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004, 2007, 2013 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Verses marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org))

Verses marked MSG are taken from THE MESSAGE. Copyright © by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Verses marked KJV are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Italicized emphasis in Scripture quotations is added by the author.

*Cover by Ashley Munn*

*Cover photo © iStockphoto / laurha*

## THE 20 HARDEST QUESTIONS EVERY MOM FACES

Copyright © 2016 Dannah Gresh

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

[www.harvesthousepublishers.com](http://www.harvesthousepublishers.com)

ISBN 978-0-7369-6284-1 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-6285-8 (eBook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Gresh, Dannah, 1967- author.

Title: The 20 hardest questions every mom faces / Dannah Gresh.

Other titles: Twenty hardest questions every mom faces

Description: Eugene, Oregon : Harvest House Publishers, 2016.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016000196 (print) | LCCN 2016029600 (ebook) | ISBN

9780736962841 (pbk.) | ISBN 9780736962858 ()

Subjects: LCSH: Motherhood—Religious aspects—Christianity. |

Parenting—Religious aspects—Christianity. | Child rearing—Religious aspects—Christianity.

Classification: LCC BV4529.18 .G79 2016 (print) | LCC BV4529.18 (ebook) | DDC

248.8/431—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016000196>

**All rights reserved.** No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

**Printed in the United States of America**

16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 / BP-JC / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# Contents

1. Soul-Breaking Questions . . . . .	7
2. Soul-Healing Answers . . . . .	13
3. Who Do You Think You Are? . . . . .	27
4. Am I Messing Up My Kids? . . . . .	37
5. How Many Kids Should I Have? . . . . .	45
6. Should I Work or Stay at Home? . . . . .	55
7. Soccer, Ballet, Piano...or Family Time? . . . . .	65
8. Homeschool, Public School, or Private Christian School? . . . . .	73
9. Who Comes First—My Husband or the Kids? . . . .	85
10. Is It Okay for My Kids to Say <i>Darn</i> or <i>Shut Up</i> ? . . . .	95
11. Should We Do Sleepovers? . . . . .	103
12. How Should We Talk to Our Kids About Bullies? . . . . .	111
13. Is My Child Ready to Make a Decision to Follow Christ? . . . . .	121

14. How Do I Keep My Kids from Walking Away from the Faith? . . . . .	129
15. Why? Why? Why? . . . . .	139
16. What's for Dinner? . . . . .	145
17. To Vaccinate or Not to Vaccinate? . . . . .	153
18. Is It Harmful to Teach Our Children Modesty? . . . .	163
19. What Do I Do If My Child Might Be Gay? . . . . .	173
20. Does Intersex Legitimize Transgenderism? . . . . .	185
21. Should My Child Have a Cell Phone? . . . . .	193
22. At What Age Should We Have <i>the Talk</i> ? (And Should I Tell Them About My Past?). . . . .	201
23. Soul-Healing Praise (a Final Word) . . . . .	209
My Soul-Breaking Questions and Soul-Healing Answers . . . . .	213
Grace Prep's 40 Points of Grace . . . . .	216
Notes . . . . .	220

# One

## Soul-Breaking Questions

*Someone already knows the right answers to the deepest insecurities and complaints of your soul.*

I once lobbed a meatloaf at my husband's head in front of my children.

Having just returned home after a few days away, I found the laundry looming over my head like Mount Everest and my family having existed primarily on Fruit Loops for the extended weekend. It was one of those “emotionally wealthy” times of the month for me. And my family was emotionally needy. The answer to this dilemma came to me with certainty—one cheese-stuffed, bacon-wrapped, barbecue-laden meatloaf coming up!

We were sitting at the quintessential dinner table with mashed potatoes steaming and warm blueberry muffins melting the real butter. The first bite of that mouthwatering meatloaf was almost to my mouth when my husband did the unthinkable—he mentioned the laundry. My next moment was not a stable one. While I will fall short of confessing that I outright threw my plate at him, I'll admit that I sort of flicked it toward his face.

Sadly, I missed.

That's when I noticed the fear in my children's sweet eyes, which were as large as the saucer I'd just thrown. (Proof to you, I hope, that I don't often throw meatloaf or any other items—food or otherwise.) So I did what any emotionally wealthy woman would do. I ran to the bathroom.



That's when my husband became my hero. He followed me, calmly opened the door, and held his hand out to me as if he were asking me to dance.

"Our kids are going to remember this as one of the worst moments of their childhood or one of the funniest, depending on how we react," he explained lovingly. "I'm up for making it the second. How about you?"

He led me back to the dining room, where he commenced a comedy routine that to this day I say belongs on *The Tonight Show*.

Our kids laughed. And so did I.



I'm not a perfect mom.

If you're looking for a mom who appears to have it all together, head on over to *goop.com*, where you can read about founder and CEO Gwyneth Paltrow creating her kids' supposedly delicious and picture-perfect meals out of quinoa and kale immediately following a workout that centers her spirit and flattens her abs. (Of course, Gwyneth might admit to you that she is blessed with a little extra support in the form of nannies and blog writers compared to many of us.)

This book doesn't really contain all the right answers.

Just some of the hardest questions.

And a four-step process in which you can find custom-made answers *just for you*.

If ever a mom needed answers, it's on the backdrop of being a millennial, where Pinterest-perfect domestication meets career-minded savvy. A mom is expected to craft, bake, sew, decorate, and blog about it with hipster style, all while generating income in some ultra-creative fashion, whether it's a new *Shark Tank*-worthy start-up company or the world's most SEO-friendly Etsy store. (Did I mention that when you bake it needs to be with ingredients that are local, organic, grass-fed, and dairy-free?)

And we haven't gotten to the matter of schooling. No longer is it

taken for granted that the big yellow school bus will pick up your five-year-old for kindergarten. There are homeschools and private schools to consider. And pay for. Add all this domesticity, professionalism, and educating to the pressure for a Christian mom to nurture her children spiritually, and you have the recipe for a nervous breakdown.

Of course, *nervous breakdown* is a term from yesteryear. Back then, such symptoms as loss of energy, muscle fatigue, anxiety, physical pain, and negative thinking used to lead to a temporary time-out for a mom. Today they send her to the doctor's office for a bottle of antidepressants. And she's told to keep on going!

Can you identify?

You don't have to actually be depressed to feel the pain.

You don't have to actually be depressed to feel the pain. Nearly half of stay-at-home moms surveyed by Gallup stated that they are "struggling."<sup>1</sup> The research seemed to indicate that the likelihood of stress, depression, or anxiety was greater when a mom's financial resources for parenting and living were less. In other words, half of moms out there are just overwhelmed in a world that expects too much out of too little!

Which half are you in?

To be honest with you, I have to admit that I'm more like one of those overwhelmed moms.

It seems nothing comes easy in the art of crafting little hearts and minds into big people. Along with the giggles, parenting has brought moments of paralyzing fear. Following all too many moments of peaceful naps, it has served me anxious thoughts. And along with the private moments of pride-filled beaming at report cards or finger paintings have come insecurities of comparing my shameful parenting moments to the picture-perfect Facebook snapshots of other mothers who make me feel as if I'm not doing it quite right.



I'm not the only woman to feel the ache of motherhood in this way.  
And neither are you.

The anxiety of motherhood is often felt before our wombs or arms are even filled with a new life assigned to us. Hannah knew it acutely before she felt the first kick in her womb. She described the ache you and I feel.

.....  
All along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety  
and vexation (1 Samuel 1:16).

Anxiety is the feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about an upcoming event or something with an uncertain outcome.

*What will his APGAR score be?*

*Is she walking soon enough?*

*Can I get him into that private kindergarten?*

*Will she make the team? Why didn't she make the team?*

*Is he ready to give his life to Christ? Is it too soon?*

*Will her faith survive college?*

The word *vexation* means “annoyed, frustrated, worried.”

*When will she start sleeping through the night?*

*Why doesn't my husband ever worry about any of this stuff?*

*What can I do to make them shut up for five minutes!*

*Did I just scar my kids for life by throwing that meatloaf?*

*Can I at least take a bubble bath by myself?*

*What's wrong with me? Am I a bad mother?*

Well, those were some of my questions. What are yours?

Let's be honest. The anxiety and vexation that Hannah experienced is alive and well in us today. The questions often continue nagging our souls until they erupt in anxiety and vexation. I asked moms who follow me on social media what that looks like in their lives. Here's what some of them shared.



“I become short-tempered with my husband and my kids and eventually dissolve into tears.”

“I worry about how my girls are impacted by not having their dad in their lives. The anxiety of whether they will seek love in men the way I did as a young girl (and even today as an adult sometimes) overwhelms me.”

“Motherhood can easily turn into just motions and tasks...I am robbed of the gift of my children when worry and fear take my thoughts.”

“Anxiety, frustration, and worry manifest themselves by taking over my otherwise relaxing shower time!”

“I move into ‘dictator parenting’ mode.”

“Control mode! When I get stressed about being the perfect mother, wife, employee, church member, friend...I try to control everything around me. I get very sharp with anyone who isn’t on track. My boys take the brunt of it.”

“I yell more!”

“I play out the different negative outcomes in my mind—fixating on them. In my mind, if I think it, it won’t happen...or at least it won’t take me by surprise.”

“Guilt! Worry leads to stress, which leads to being short-tempered, and then the guilt comes.”

There’s good news. We can find Jesus in the soul-breaking questions of motherhood. That’s the thing about questions. They have answers. The anxiety, frustration, worry, and every little annoying thing can actually be tools to lead us to God’s plan. His answers.

Hannah used them as tools, and so will we. And it’s her example that we’ll follow in a quest to answer our hard questions. You and I may arrive at different answers to the same question because we’ll be guided by the Wisdom Giver instead of cookie-cutter solutions or legalistic responses. (I’ve already made it clear that I don’t have the

answers, right?) And the beauty of this book is this: The goal is not for you to have 20 answers to 20 difficult questions. The goal is to develop the skill and muscle to find God's answers when the big questions come. The path to confident, calm, happy, and peaceful parenting is always within your reach.

The questions I've addressed in this book aren't the only hard questions you'll face. There were so many more that came to mind as I wrote this book. How do I talk to my kids about my divorce? What's my child's responsibility in the race conversation? What does terrorism do to my child's heart? I don't know enough about those hard things to guide you through a conversation. The 20 questions I selected are ones I've either wrestled through or put a lot of hours into researching. Again, I don't have the right answers to everything. Just a process to help you find some answers yourself.

Let me show you Hannah's four-step process to finding answers.

## Two

### Soul-Healing Answers

*As we pour out our questions to God, we will also  
master the art of pouring out our conviction.*

“In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD.”<sup>1</sup>

The questions of motherhood poured out of her.

*Lord, do You see me?*

*Could You change Your mind on this one?*

*Is there something I could do differently?*

*Please, could You just let me have one baby boy?*

She pours out her soul-breaking pleadings to the God of the universe.

Eli, the priest, observes her.

This was a day and age of pretense and sophistication, not casual, unveiled expression. The behavior of a woman in public was especially guarded.

But not this woman.

The fear of man had fallen from her, as is often the case when we war for our children—those we have and those yet to be. The battles we don’t have the courage to fight for our own hearts, we rise up to fight for our babies.

Her mouth is moving, but no sound comes out. The soundless words that spew from her spirit are thick with passion and angst.

Distraught emotion distorts her expression. Tears flow shamelessly down her cheeks.

The man of God comes to a heartless but understandable conclusion: This woman has had too much wine. Sometimes people misread us when our hearts are hurting. But that does not make them any less effective tools of God in our lives, and Eli is about to be a tool in Hannah's.

"How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine," he wrongfully challenges.

Hannah asserts the truth of her circumstances. She's drunk only with desire for a baby.

"I was pouring out my soul to the Lord," she confesses.

And he sees. As clearly as he sees the wet tears on her face, he sees the guttural pleadings erupting from her anxious and vexed soul.

"Go in *peace*, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him," he says, not even knowing her cause. He doesn't need to. The sincerity of her pleading has been enough.

And the peace comes.



As I read the account of Hannah in the Bible earlier this year—my heart vexed and anxious with the things of life—I felt a prayer of my own leap out from within me. I wrote it in the margin of my Bible: "Lord, make me drunk with prayer!"

It's time to renounce our pretense and country-club faith so we can pour out our souls to the Lord.

It's time to renounce our pretense and country-club faith so we can pour out our souls to the Lord. It's a risky way to pray. Some will misread and misunderstand the faith of a mother pouring out her soul-breaking questions. But isn't that kind of the point of prayer? Isn't

prayer the tool of an audaciously optimistic woman? One whose faith rises up above what her eyes tell her to be true? If prayer makes us anything, it should be radical. And peace-filled in the chaos of living.

I see four steps in Hannah's prayer process that took her from a mother-to-be who was anxious and soul-vexed to one who was at peace. Let's learn to follow her trail.

## **Four Steps to Finding Soul-Healing Answers**

### *Pour out the insecurities and complaints of your soul.*

Hannah tells Eli, "I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD" (1 Samuel 1:15). The Hebrew word translated *pouring out* is the verb *sapak*, which means "to shed, to spill, to be scattered." Sounds like a messy business to me. This is not your neat and clean prayer list. It's a spilling of the soul with no sense of where or when things may land.

Far too often, I have limited my praying to my devotion time or to writing in my prayer journal. Specific prayers were often stuck in my gut because my motives didn't seem quite pure enough. I wanted to be a "prayer warrior," but my heart also yearned for the safety of a neat and tidy prayer list.

But prayer is not a safe thing.

Last year I read a book that freed me to pray like Hannah. It was during a time when I was filled with many worries for all three of my children, and I thought the burden of it might just put me in a psych ward! Each of my children was struggling in a unique way. I felt the heaviness of it to my core. To top it off, my husband, Bob, and I hit a financial slump that added to the stress. And then an unexpected \$5000 expense at my ministry jarred me as if I'd hit a speed bump at 60 miles an hour. It wasn't the biggest problem on my list, but it was the last one I could handle.

On the day I hit that bump—still rubbing my head fresh from banging it against the ceiling of my anxiety—I read these words in *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* by Richard Foster:

The truth of the matter is, we all come to prayer with a tangled mass of motives—altruistic and selfish, merciful and hateful, loving and bitter. Frankly, this side of eternity we will never unravel the good from the bad, the pure from the impure. But what I have come to see is that God is big enough to receive us with all our mixture.<sup>2</sup>

No sooner had I underlined those words, than prayer began to erupt out of my soul, my mouth brimming with the spilling and scattering of thoughts with not a care where they landed. It was not a pretty prayer. I spewed out onto my God all the bottled-up fears. The sounds coming from my mouth were a mix of humble pleading and prideful fury. Rooted in the new awareness that God was big enough to sort it all out, I erupted and trusted my Father to receive me in all my mixture.

The ending to my prayer was a doozy. There was no “in the name of Jesus, amen.” Instead, I punctuated my prayer this way: “And don’t You see that we can’t handle the added burden of this extra \$5000 problem? You own the cattle on a thousand hills. Couldn’t You just sell a few?”

I stopped. The audacity of that last question! But I wasn’t embarrassed or ashamed. I was just finished. Empty of questions. For perhaps the first time in my life, I had truly cast my cares upon Him. I can’t say why, but the next thing I did was to tromp out of the house, slamming the door behind me, as if I were leaving God alone in the house to think about my blur of requests.

I visited our llamas and horses for a few minutes. (Did I mention that I live on a hobby farm?) Butted heads with the fainting goats. Hugged the dog. Sat in the sunshine. And then decided I should go back inside to face God like the grown woman I am.

The moment I arrived back inside the house, my assistant Eileen texted me.

“Steph and Eloy felt led to send a gift—\$5000. Thought you’d want to know.”

The timing of it! To the second.

It was as if God was saying, “Atta girl! Now *that* was some honest prayer.”



Put your journal down. Back away from your weekly prayer plan. Abort the prayer list. Those things have a time and place, but it's time for you to start to pray like a woman drunk with prayer. Just "spill and scatter" the questions. God can sort them out if we'll just pour them out.

*Give your children to the Lord.*

Hannah's spilling out of her heart contains a promise: "I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life." Pouring out our anxieties and worries is an incomplete act and becomes extraordinarily selfish if we do not steadfastly and wholeheartedly commit to God's ownership.

This truth hit me squarely between the eyes in stupefied bewilderment a few years ago. I was speaking at the D6 Family conference. This was my thesis: The best way we bid God's kingdom to this earth is by protecting the covenant of marriage, which is a picture of Christ and the church, and which requires us to rise up to protect the family. I followed *New York Times* bestselling author and pastor David Platt, whose *Radical* style punctuates sentences with explosive yet gentle phrases uncompromised by what he calls today's "Christian spin on the American dream." Platt's thesis, based on Luke 14:26, went something like this as I remember it: To follow the kingdom of God, you have to be willing to hate your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters.

I felt sucker punched. *How can I drag myself up on that stage with notes that are completely contrary to his message?*

But as I thought it through, I realized that our ideas were not drastically opposed. Like much of God's truth, they fit together in paradoxical splendor. It's okay to want great things for your family as long as they are not *the* Great Thing you hope for. We can bring to God all our rich dreams and hopes and plans for our children as long as we also bring Him their hearts. Here's how Platt said it that day:

Our goal in parenting is not for our kids to get a great education, as great as that is. It's not for them to be great athletes. Our goal is not for them to go on great dates and to

find a great husband or a great wife. Our goal is not for them to have a great career where they have a great job making great money. *Our goal is for them to love a great God.*<sup>3</sup>

Then he said, “Tell them that God’s kingdom is infinitely more important than their family.”

Hannah was willing to say that and live it. She promised God that she would give her son fully back to Him. And she did.

Am I willing to do that?

Are you?

As we pour out our questions for God, we will also master the art of pouring out our conviction. He has entrusted us with His children. We must give them back to Him.

### *Tell someone.*

At the thirtieth anniversary of Moms in Prayer International, the founder and my dear friend Fern Nichols taught on the nature of prayer. She said that most of the teaching on prayer in Scripture is in the context of corporate prayer as opposed to private prayer. “When two or three are gathered, there I am in the midst of them.” Jesus said this is how we should pray: *Our* Father, who art in heaven. Not *my* Father, but *our* Father. We were not made to walk this Christian life alone, but in community.

That is not to say that the prayers prayed in your private prayer closet are not important and powerful. But I myself struggle with wanting to stay in my prayer closet. Safe. Contained. Alone. When God instructs me to pray with others.

Hannah was not hiding in her prayer closet. She was led by her husband on a journey to worship and sacrifice. They were participating in a communal act of worship, not staying home alone and hiding. This brought Hannah into a conversation with Eli, the priest. And that brought Eli into prayerful agreement with the pleadings of her soul.

We must be moms who pray *together*. We must drag our fears about vaccinations and our struggle over school choice to God *together*. We must bring our son’s learning disability and our daughter’s lack of

kindness to God *together*. We must petition God for provision for a family missions trip and direction for college selection to God *together*. Trust me, if we can't bring these things to God as a team, we will find ourselves in utter isolation and shame when a prodigal walks away from family and God.

But I understand—you want to be a good testimony. (Read with sarcasm, please.) You feel you need to walk as a leader through this life and can't be seen as weak. There's something in you that makes you different from others and minimizes your need for community. You're an introvert? Ah, I see! I know. (It takes one to know one.) Yes, go ahead—hide in your prayer closet alone. But the enemy is coming for your family, and he loves a good game of hide-and-seek because that's the best place for him to find you alone and vulnerable! (Yes, you should still be reading with sarcasm.)

The enemy of our souls seeks to find us in isolation. There he can weaken us, tempt us, and defeat us. There he can pounce on us like a lion seeking whom he can devour.

Dear sister, don't walk alone. Not with your children at stake. Tell someone.

### *Wait.*

Sometimes God says yes (or “Here's \$5000, Dannah, to show you that I heard you”). And sometimes He says no. But most of the time, He seems to like to ask us to wait.

The Bible says that *in due time* Hannah conceived and bore a son. It didn't happen right away. The pouring out of her heart, giving her future to God, and talking to Eli *did* bring the immediate peace she so desperately needed to do the hard waiting, but the waiting was not circumnavigated. The only way to the bright, faith-filled future is through the dark night of waiting. Oh, this can be the hardest part!

The good news is this: Waiting is the act of anticipation. It's not really a passive activity, but a pressing in with all your heart, mind, and soul to catch a glimpse of God's movement in your life. The action, like all actions, can end at any time. Abruptly. And move you into the act of vibrant worship!

As I write this to you, I'm waiting for a deep healing in my family. A long-awaited wholeness that years of counseling hasn't seemed to bring...just yet. The dark night of waiting takes me through a thick forest of entanglement, full of pits and miry bogs. I am praying and waiting my way through it, doing all that God instructs to get to His sweet answer. A spiral-bound deck of tattered index cards with Bible verses on them guides me through. (Have you ever realized that God's Word is a lamp to your feet? A lamp! Not a stadium light that enables you to see 360 feet. Nor a spotlight that lets you see 30 to 40 feet. But a lamp. A small lamp that shows you where to put your feet for the next four or five paces. It is sufficient. It is enough.) The first verse in my deck is this one:

.....

*I waited patiently for the LORD;*  
he inclined to me and heard my cry.  
He drew me up from the pit of destruction,  
out of the miry bog,  
and set my feet upon a rock,  
making my steps secure.  
He put a new song in my mouth,  
a song of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear,  
and put their trust in the LORD  
(Psalm 40:1-3).

I don't like the waiting. And it's hard for me to do it patiently. But the fact is, praying prayers is like planting seeds. You have to wait. But the answers do come.



Let me show you how this four-step process can work moment by moment by telling you about an answer I received from God for one of my hard “mom questions.” This is a story about my Lexi as best as I remember it.

She was about 12 years old and thoroughly enjoying a weekly pottery-throwing class. Each week there was a new art display in the front gallery. We often enjoyed it, but this particular night my spirit recoiled when I saw what was there—a display that made me uncomfortable. There was a burned-out skeleton. A series of sculptures that were clearly Adam and Eve in salacious poses. And at the back of the display was a huge, antique Bible opened to a page in Revelation. Every word on the page had been blacked out with three exceptions “God...is...dead.” Sound unbelievable? It was. I’ve even tried to tone down what I saw. Art can be used to glorify God or to glorify darkness. Like a haunted house on Halloween that draws people just for the shock value, art is often most talked about when it shocks. This one shocked me.

By the time I took it all in, Lexi was already smacking some clay down on her pottery wheel. I had no intention of leaving her in this place and would be making my opinion of the display very clear. I marched toward her with each clack of my heels sending a message of disdain when suddenly the Lord tenderly stopped me. It was as if He illuminated how insecure, worried, possessive, and fearful I was about to be. But I was perplexed. *Certainly the Lord doesn't want me to leave my baby here in this place. Or does He?*

I decided to walk outside to my minivan to count to ten.

**First, I poured out all my fears and insecurities to the Lord.** *Could she be influenced by this? What if she thinks that stuff is okay? The spiritual world is real, and that stuff can't be inviting anything holy to linger. Will it impact her?* On and on I went, just barfing out my fears to God and reasoning that He must want me to take her right out of there. And the big question: *Should I go get her right now?*

**Next, I gave my child to Jesus.** *Lord, she is Yours.* Tears came when I prayed it. That's also when the fear subsided and peace flooded me. And a sense that the answer to my question was, *No, don't go get her. Pray.*

**Then I told someone.** I called my mom and asked her to pray with me about what I should do next. She reminded me that Lexi belonged to Jesus and was sealed by the Holy Spirit and that my greatest weapon was prayer, not walking into that room and removing her.

**Finally, I waited.** I spent the rest of the hour prayer-walking the block and waiting as the moments ticked by like hours.

When Lexi came out, she'd spun more than a pot that night. She'd left the heads of an atheistic teenage classmate and an agnostic teacher spinning with her insights about heaven and hell.

"Mom, did you see all that bad stuff in there?" she began. "It brought up a great conversation about heaven and hell!"

My little girl wasn't assaulted by the forces of hell that night. Rather, she was the one doing the assaulting in all her mighty 12-year-old spunk. It was a great moment of spiritual breakthrough for her as she discovered that relying on God's Spirit enables her to think new thoughts and to stand up for Christ in the heat of the moment.

Soul-breaking questions don't have simple answers. Nor the same answer for every mom. Soul-breaking questions require soul-healing answers, and only one Source has those: God's Spirit. If you do not have an ongoing conversation with the Holy Spirit about raising your children to be set apart in this corrupt culture, you will become a paranoid mother whose legalism does not allow her children to face the giants God means for them to face. But if you use your anxiety and vexation as reminders to enter the conversation, those giants will become tools rather than terrors. Tools that lead you to the heart of God, who has all the answers you need, sweet mother.



This book provides tools you can use to guide your conversation with the Holy Spirit. In each chapter, we'll approach one of the 20 toughest questions a mom will ever face. I'll share some insights about the question—stories, Bible verses, and some data that helps you to know you're not alone. But the power of this book is not in what I write. It's in what you will write in these pages.

At the end of each chapter, you will find four prayer prompts. Each prompt will provide some simple instructions after it to foster conversation for you to have with the Holy Spirit on the topic of that



chapter. I've included some simple prayer prompts in this chapter so you can practice the very fine art of praying like a drunk woman. Ready...set...barf!

If you do not have an ongoing conversation  
with the Holy Spirit about raising your children  
to be set apart in this corrupt culture,  
you will become a paranoid mother  
whose legalism does not allow her children to  
face the giants God means for them to face.

.... Pour out the *insecurities* and *complaints* of your soul ....

Is there a burden on your heart related to motherhood right now? Something that just causes you to pray, "God, do You see me?" Spread it. Spill it. Scatter it. Pour out the insecurities and complaints of your soul.

..... Give your *children* to the *Lord* .....

What if God is taking you through this hardship so that you'll hold your children loosely? A loose grip enables you to give them to Him for the molding and making. How do you need to give your child or children back to Him in this specific area of soul-breaking waiting?

..... Tell *someone* .....

Do you already have a prayer partner and advisor who knows this deep soul need? If so, just text her to let her know what God is saying today and ask for some feedback. If not, spend some moments asking God whom you can open up your heart to. Schedule a time to meet with her in the next few days so you can be ready to text her as you pray through other issues. Or maybe you and she would like to read through this

book at the same time so you can meet weekly and pray through the questions together. Don't cheat on this. You'll go much further with a friend to spur you on. (Like leaving it all on the mat during a Jillian Michaels workout because your friend is beside you versus "phoning it in" for the last ten minutes because no one is watching!)

## Wait

There will be two parts to the waiting work you do at the end of each chapter.

First, I'll just provide a reminder that periods of waiting are painful parts of the Christian walk. I'll leave a verse about waiting on the Lord here for you in each chapter so you don't grow fainthearted. Today it's just a review.

*I waited patiently for the LORD;*  
he inclined to me and heard my cry.  
He drew me up from the pit of destruction,  
out of the miry bog,  
and set my feet upon a rock,  
making my steps secure.  
He put a new song in my mouth,  
a song of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear,  
and put their trust in the LORD  
(Psalm 40:1-3).

I like to use these verses as prayers, speaking the words of God back to Him. For example, if I were to pray the verse above while waiting for Lexi to come out of the pottery class, it might sound like this: "I'm waiting patiently outside this pottery class, Lord. Lean down to me and hear my cry for Lexi to have strength. Draw her up from any pit of destruction the darkness of that art display could set for her. Set her feet high in a secure place and make her secure in there tonight. Put a song in my mouth as I wait, Lord. Let me be full of praise and not

fear. I pray that You'll use this to let others see and fear and put their trust in You."

Next, you'll chart your petitions to God. Use the chart at the back of the book on page 213 to record your petition/request to the Lord on the specific topic for the chapter. This will collect your soul-breaking questions in to one place so they are easy to review. And when those beautiful, soul-healing answers come to you, record those there too so you can celebrate and praise the Lord.