



May 2015

***Imperfect Motherhood:
Trusting God with our Weaknesses***

As mothers, we want to give our children the best of ourselves. But we oftentimes live under a cloud of discouragement because we know that we are imperfect. Rather than getting our best, our children frequently experience us in our weakest moments. By God's grace, we can trust that He is working *to redeem our weaknesses and use them as teaching tools* for our children and for ourselves.

I am the very blessed mother of four children.

But, just because I have 4 children, does not mean that I know what I'm doing. I absolutely don't know what I'm doing! I would be labeled by most as a "perfectionist in recovery." I grew up wanting to be the best at whatever I did...wanting to do it, and do it well, and be noticed and recognized for my strengths. Music was what I loved and threw myself into, and craved any praise and awards and accolades I could get. I wanted to be the best! And I worked hard, and achieved, and might have been the best at something for like 2 seconds...until someone better came along! There's always someone better. My adult years have been spent breaking down the mentality that "achieving and being the best" is the goal. ***That's not the goal!*** And certainly is not God's purpose for me as a mom.

But how many of us went into motherhood with high expectations for our success? We desired to have children, we longed to be moms, and we were handed a precious child that immediately gave us the title...MOM. We read pregnancy books, then we read baby care books, with the goal to "get it right." We're going to be the baby whisperer. And then the baby screams for hours and we do everything that the books says and they don't stop crying! We google "screaming baby" and try everything that google says, and the baby still doesn't stop crying. And immediately we begin to question our ability to be a mom. "I knew I shouldn't have had children. I don't know what I'm doing. My child will grow up with some sort of emotional problems due to all of the crying/screaming/lack of my parenting skills!" I AM A FAILURE!

Nothing has been more joyful and heart-filling and challenging and exhausting than motherhood. And nothing has shone a spotlight on my weaknesses, inabilities, imperfections, and flaws like motherhood has. I have 4 very different children with very different needs. Motherhood is tougher than anyone tells you...but I believe God has so much to teach us about Himself as our Father and as our Emotional Provider and Sustainer as we parent our children. And, I'm learning a lot about myself and about God through this parenting process. The longer I do it, the more my perspective changes. The more God shines lights on the sinful parts of me, unhealed parts of me, fearful parts, insecure parts...and continues to change my heart...which then opens the doors for my children's hearts to change.

Our weaknesses can be our biggest asset...because they push us to depend on God to give us strength. They push us to find our **identity in Him...not in what we do**. They push us to teach our children that no measure of success or failure by the world's standards can define who we are. They force us to either believe that what God says about us is true, or the whole thing of

faith is a sham. WE MUST EMBRACE OUR WEAKNESSES, because it is there that God will be made known to the world for any good that comes from us.

We have all heard the passage in 2 Corinthians where Paul talks about his weakness...*his thorn*...and how Christ was made strong through Paul's weakness. And we probably think this is a great passage...until we begin to experience our own weakness. And then Paul might become a little annoying...like "great for you Paul, but I'm not really happy that I am failing at this mom thing, wife thing, human thing!" But, I don't think we can find a better explanation in scripture of the power of Christ working through our weakness than in 2 Corinthians 12.

The Message Bible says it like this...

⁷⁻¹⁰ Because of the extravagance of those revelations, and so I wouldn't get a big head, I was given the gift of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. Satan's angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees. No danger then of walking around high and mighty! At first I didn't think of it as a gift, and begged God to remove it. Three times I did that, and then he told me,

My grace is enough; it's all you need.

My strength comes into its own in your weakness.

Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness. Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size—abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so the weaker I get, the stronger I become.

The greatest concept we can learn from this passage of scripture is that God will allow us to experience pain to keep us close to Him. God is well aware that when we believe we are strong, capable, & self-sustaining that we will not look to Him to be our strength. Because we will see no need for His power. But, when we acknowledge that we are weak, and that He is all we have to give us strength, we will stay close to Him. And that is what He knows we need...closeness to Him.

One of our biggest beliefs about failing is that we are failures.

Failing at something does not equal "I am a failure." When I fail in how I handle a situation with one of my children, it does not equal "I am a failure." We will fail at hundreds of things over the years...situations mishandled, learning the hard way, but WE ARE NOT FAILURES. When that is our mentality, mothering becomes our identity and it's not meant to be. Our identity only comes through Christ. How we do, as a mom, does not determine who we are as women.

So, we can live in a place of discouragement and defeat, or we can embrace our weakness, and cling to Jesus in dependence. Our children will learn much more from us admitting our weakness, showing them what it looks like to apologize, to learn from our mistakes. They will learn volumes when we teach them that failing and messing up are OK...natural parts of life. They will learn what it looks like to say, "Jesus is all I have to strengthen me." If our greatest desire is for our children to desire relationship with Christ, then we must show them through our own lives how to live lives that aren't perfect...but to admit our complete dependence on Him.

An Imperfect Mother,
Melody