

## Different mothers

By Maria Houston

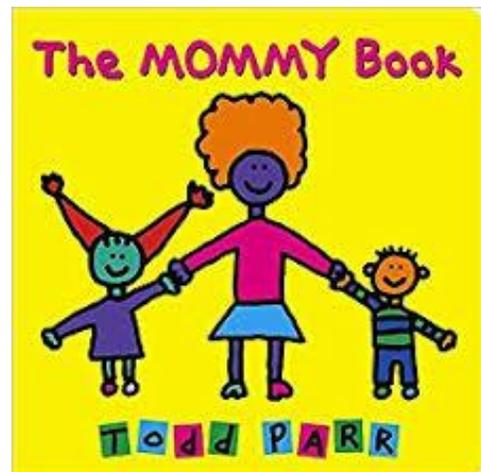
*On my daughter's bookshelf sits "The Mommy Book" by Todd Parr. Within the pages of this adorable colorful book is the reminder that mommies are very different. He shares the message that while mommies come with their own interests, skills, talents, and occupations, all mommies love their children.*

*I am only six years into this journey called motherhood, but I have felt immense pressure over the years to fit into a specific mold. Blame it on the American dream of being a stay-at-home mother, with 2.5 kids and a comfortable home with a white picket fence. Perhaps blame the numerous children's books that depict the mother as a warm, nurturing, faceless figure who cares for her multiple children without any personality of her own. Maybe it's the sitcoms I grew up with where the mother effortlessly cares for her children while being beautiful, cooking wonderful dinners, and always knowing the right thing to do. Regardless of the source, the message has been the same: there is a correct and expected way to be a mother.*

*For years I have loved the BBC television show "Call the Midwife." My husband is perplexed as to why I choose to hear sad stories and watch mothers in labor, but I have cherished this drama because it explores different journeys of motherhood. Women become mothers under different circumstances. Their journeys as mothers are altered by the children they bring into the world. When we watch this drama we can see our stories represented. This show brings faces to motherhood and drops the façade that mothers are all the same.*

*My journey in motherhood has taken drastically different turns over the years, charting me on an adventure I never expected. It is easy to believe the lie that I am a different kind of mother and have failed at meeting the standard. But as I listen to other women and hear their stories I discover that they have also been told the same lie. Whether women work or stay at home, are military wives or wives of businessmen, have experienced post partum depression or are blissfully happy, are single mothers or happily married, have only one child or six, many women feel they are not living up to the expectation of motherhood. Mothers tend to compare themselves to other mothers. Either they tear themselves down while envying the lives of other mothers, or they judge other mothers without understanding the full picture. This tendency to compare, envy, and judge ends up destroying us and the sisterhood of mothers that could be possible.*

Scripture speaks into this matter by reminding us that God is the one who designed our motherhood journey, and we are to embrace what He planned for us. In Hebrews 12:1 we are



instructed to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” In Proverbs we are warned to “let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you...do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil” (Proverbs 4:25,27). We are not to look to the motherhood journeys of others as a blueprint, but instead we are to keep our eyes on Christ as we walk the course that was created for us. Remember, in Hebrews 12:2 we are told “let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” We are only accountable to be the mothers God has called us to be, and that looks different for every woman. When we forsake the calling He has given us in our quest to imitate another mother’s journey, we abandon the work He has for us.

I encourage women to embrace the diversity of what it means to be a mother. I challenge us to love, support, and uplift women who have different motherhood journeys than we do. I pray we can listen to their hearts and hear their stories in an effort to love one another in a way that only women can. I ask that we support one another in our efforts to be the mothers that God has called us to be and forsake the lies we are tempted to believe.

As I page through Parr’s book I wonder if he writes this book more for the mothers than for the children. After all, children love their moms just as we are. We are the ones who need to be a little kinder to ourselves.