

5 Myths that Lead to Mom Guilt

Before I became a parent, I thought the term “mom guilt” was so silly. Why would all these lovely moms even think for a second that they weren’t good enough?! Clearly they were divinely chosen for the children God provided them ... so what was the big deal?

Hahaha ... haha ... ha ... cue my own struggle with mom guilt.

The moment you become pregnant and venture into the world of parenting, there are as many opinions and approaches as there are people in this world. It was shocking to me at first! It seemed like moms formed opinions (and defended them to the death) about the weirdest things, and it started with the pregnancy and birth experience. Natural birth or medicated? Hospital or home? Breast milk or formula? Swaddling or not? Sleep in the crib or co-sleep? And then, potentially the weirdest of all, food purees or baby-led weaning?

In a sense, I was correct, albeit naïve, about mom guilt being silly. Since you have been divinely chosen to be the parent of your child, you are the perfect mom for your little one. Everywhere you turn, there are some big myths lurking in plain sight on mommy blogs, well-meaning comments and even well-thought-out opinions that make believing in God’s sovereignty a little more difficult than I initially realized.

Myth #1: You can be the perfect parent.

Say it with me, THE PERFECT PARENT DOESN’T EXIST. A little louder for the people in the back!

You are a sinner. I am a sinner. Every parent that has ever walked this earth has been a sinner. What a comfort! You’re in good (or bad, depending on how you look at it) company! That

means you are not going to do parenting perfectly, despite what Instagram or Facebook may show.

For me, I am a huge dreamer and a hopeless optimist. I am constantly misjudging time and what I'm able to do with it. My biggest tormenter in this area is my own expectations. I want to be able to provide all the activities and fun and nutritious food that I can muster, but I have to stop and ask who I am really doing it for.

Sadly, a lot of time it's for me and my own expectations.

So I'm giving you (and me) permission to let go of the myth of perfect parenting. Ask God what He wants you to do with your day as a mom and go with that. When you fail (and you will), rest in His redeeming grace and trust that He is Lord over all.

Myth #2: There is a "right" way to do things.

Ah yes, it feels so good to be on the right side of parenting.

Except, wait; there is no right side of parenting.

As a culture, we're not very good at disagreeing, which is part of what fuels this myth. Being a mom is intensely meaningful and personal. Naturally, it often becomes a large part of our identity, which is another complicating factor. Toss in some trendy campaigns (i.e. "breast is best," "prevent picky-eating with baby-led weaning") and you've got a lovely, believable myth that there is only one "right" way to do things.

Let me bust this myth right here and now for you. Each and every child is unique and different ... as is each mom! There is no "right" way, aside from making sure your child is fed, loved and cared for. Whatever method you choose to accomplish these things, within safety guidelines, is fair game. So quit the comparison and rest in the knowledge that God chose YOU to

be your child's mom, and He has given YOU the wisdom and strength you need to make decisions about and for your child.

Myth #3: If you had done more, your child wouldn't have these problems.

Without diving into an enormous debate about nature vs. nurture, I'd like to give you permission to stop beating yourself up about any kind of problem your child may have, whether it's physical, emotional or mental.

This myth is especially difficult because we do know that as parents, we are the single biggest influence on our children ... which is exciting and terrifying. However, don't let this fact get twisted into the myth that you are in control of your child.

Just like it's not God's fault when we sin, it's not your fault when your child sins. Your child chose to sin. It IS your job to disciple and discipline your child when he or she does sin, however that may look in your family. There is a difference.

We can't change the past. We can only change how we act and react in the present, which will hopefully impact the future.

When you're feeling overwhelmed about your child's problems, stop and pray. God loves your child (even more than you). He alone changes hearts and minds. Place your children in His hands and ask for His wisdom on how to be the mom they need today.

Myth #4: Your child's successes are a direct reflection of you.

This is the step-sister of myth #3 and it's just as damaging. When we take credit for the work God is doing in someone's life (even our child's), we swell with pride. We quickly spiral into thinking we can do it without God's help (wrong),

and we continue to place expectations of fulfillment and perfection on our children that aren't meant to be there.

When we place our hopes and dreams on our children, it is a crushing weight they aren't meant to bear.

Wouldn't it be nice if our children fit into the boxes we created for them? Thankfully they do not; God has bigger and better plans for them (and you)!

Celebrate their successes without taking credit.

Your children are on loan to you for a short time.

Confess where you've taken credit for God's work! Pray and give your children back to Him. Ask for help to see them as His.

Myth #5: You should listen to every piece of advice or comment that you stumble across.

Ah, the unsolicited comment or opinion. While it's annoying in the best of circumstances, it can be downright befuddling as a first-time mom.

Whether it's a mom blog, a well-meaning church lady or your own parent, bad advice and unhelpful comments are everywhere. And for some reason, they just hit different when they're directed toward your parenting choices or your children. Maybe because we're still obsessed with doing it the "right" way.

I think what I've learned from my own experiences with unsolicited comments is that I want to remain supportive, curious and servant-hearted toward other moms.

I'm not perfect in this.

I know I've likely made statements with not-so-hidden assumptions that may have been hurtful, but I hope to extend grace to others in this as I hope they'll extend grace to me.

Lord, help me be a help, not a hurt, to other moms and parents! Let my words and actions be filled with Your truth and grace.

Mom guilt is the worst.

Parenting is already hard enough without needlessly feeling guilty about the minutia of child-rearing. So let me remind us all again – you have been divinely chosen by God to be the parent of your child, which means you are the perfect mom for your little one.

All that's left is to pray to God for wisdom, grace, patience and discernment while He works in and through you for the sake of your child!

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