

Confessions of a Christian Parent: I'm a Messy Mom

Parenting would be a lot easier if it came with a map: "You start *here*, you end up *here*, and ***this is how you get there.***" Simple. Logical. Organized. A road map. But if I've learned anything about parenting so far, it is that it's complicated, sometimes illogical and definitely messy. Oh there are so many layers and qualifications to the messy!

As if parenting was not hard enough, in our family we got the added joys and challenges of raising two little girls with special needs. Disability should really, really come with a road map. Because there are specialists, therapies, IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) and so many resources to sort through.

When I buy a new appliance, it comes with a manual. Why can't we, people, complex individuals with different flaws, gifts and talents, not come with an encyclopedia?

Here is a confession: I mess up a lot (See? I said parenting was messy, and this is one of the messy parts). I yell at my kids, I waste time on Facebook, I forget to make eye contact when my kids talk to me because I have a smart phone. I don't pray enough with them. I forget they are watching and learning how I live my life.

And I dread the next surgery for one of my daughters. Sometimes I wonder if she will gain enough mobility to justify putting her body through the stress of being sliced and cut. I wish I had a way to know that these aggressive interventions will make a difference in the long run.

It's hard. It's just plain hard when you feel you are running blindly trying to figure it out as you go.

But the good news is, we are not running blind.

“God said, ‘*My presence will go with you. I’ll see the journey to the end*’” (Ex. 33:14, MSG; emphasis added).

And that is a promise. God’s presence is with us until He sees our journey to the end. I love that!

I might not have a road map that helps me potty train my child (another messy part). Or how to get my kids to eat vegetables. Or how to help my daughter confront a friend who is not being kind. But I have a guide, a guide who loves me, who offers hope, who stays by my side even when I mess up.

It is the guide who gives me the words to say when my kids have a broken heart. The guide who listens to my desperate prayers as I try to meet the different needs of my children with special needs. A voice that whispers to me that He has a plan. That even if I mess up, he turns the broken pieces into something beautiful.

I don’t really need a map, I just need to let God guide me because His presence will go with me, and He will see my journey (and the journey of my children) to the end.

*Adapted from **Ellen Stumbo’s** blog at . Ellen is a pastor’s wife and she writes about finding beauty in brokenness with gritty honesty and openness. She is passionate about sharing the real—sometimes beautiful and sometimes ugly—aspects of faith, parenting, special needs and adoption. She has been published in Focus on the Family, LifeWay, MomSense, Not Alone, and Mamapedia among others.*