

God, Can You Please Help Me Get My Kids to Bed?

OK. Seriously. When did bedtime go from a sweet time of books, prayers and song to wailing and gnashing of teeth? I can't remember when the change happened this summer, but happen it did.

Summer is just the worst. Last night my youngest daughters where unwilling to consider bed: "Why is it light outside? Surely that means bedtime isn't for hours yet! You must be mistaken, Mommy!"

Actually, that was my English major translation of our conversation. It was really more like, "Wahhhhhhhhhh!"

I think the only thing I'm looking forward to about my children going back to school is a schedule. And if you know me, that might shock you. I start summer loving the unstructured days and night, and the opportunities to be spontaneous, and I definitely like to play with my kids, so sometimes during the summer months, we miss a bit more sleep than we should.

Maybe that's the problem—lack of sleep makes for children who struggle to sleep, which makes for a mommy who's hanging by a ragged thread at 10 p.m. ... well, maybe 9 p.m. ... oh, all right, 8 p.m.

Those are not my most stellar mom moments. I just want them to go to bed already. I mean, really: *Go to bed!* My nights get later and later because after those two—ahem—cuties go to bed, there are still three more people I'd like to hang with! And thankfully they'd actually like to hang out with me!

So, what to do? I wish I knew.

Last night, I actually started bed time at 6:30. It began perfectly. I must have shown my —i.e., weakness—because they

sensed it. My two sweeties turned into my two—for lack of an appropriate word—not-so-sweeties!

I've reached the point of being the bad cop mommy consistently when it comes to these issues. They are both old enough to handle bedtime better. Their stalling could actually be an Olympic sport—they have practiced it enough. I've had to lay down laws I never imagined even considering. Only one prayer. Only one kiss (well, maybe two). As the bedtime prolongs, the laws are laid down with increasing volume, both in number and tone.

Last night, my 6-year-old daughter said, "I want my nice mommy back. I don't like this mommy. Wahhhhh!"

My heart would have melted just a tad if I wasn't chuckling—chuckling on the inside because I can show no weakness. I have to be firmer than I've ever been.

I believe that the bedtime pickle I'm in is my own doing. I'm old and tired.

Honestly, it is difficult being a single parent when you're tired. It is so difficult to be "on" all the time. There are so many people to love on, encourage and train well. I get to the point where I think, "I'm just done. Please go to bed. What do you want? Chocolate? Soda? Ice cream?"

I'm just kidding to a point, but God has shown me something—as He is always doing, thank goodness. I'm always saying that God gave me my two little girls to keep me on my knees. I truly believe that He did, for many reasons. One, because I can tend to believe I have the ability to deal with everything on my own: "Got this, God. Thanks, though." Then, amazingly, I get annoyed when things don't go well: "Really, God? Could just *one* thing go easily?"

All the while, I have only uttered those "hail Mary" prayers: "God, please! Could you fix this?" and "Lord, help!" and "Oh, Father!"

I know God hears them. I know He cares. I also know that He wants more from me. He wants me to talk with Him, give Him my worries and verbalize the struggle—and in doing that, share the burden and allow Him to enter into my life in more intimate and practical ways. That prayer thing ... it's *big*.

I've written about it before. I've shared that I feel called to pray mightily for my children and others. I've said I'm determined, convicted and willing. But I haven't been, really.

I pray a lot, but they aren't thoughtful prayers. They are same ol', same ol' prayers: "Lord, please help this sweet child know Your love, feel Your presence and never doubt her identity is in You." Good prayers, but not really a dialogue.

I believe He wants me to share as I would with my prayer partner. Golly, doesn't that sound silly—the Person we are going to say our prayers to doesn't get the same level of communication as the person I share my prayer requests with? I think I've been missing something.

I love William Carey's quote: "Expect great things from God!" I believe that when I pray expecting great things, God will do great things. I don't believe that He is my vending machine; I believe that He is my Father who loves to be kind to me, my Father who loves me beyond measure, my Father who will always and only do what is absolutely best for me. That, dearest, is a great thing! How can I not want God's best? How can God's best not be great?

So as I prepare for bedtime—and any other time of day—I'm getting down on my knees—really on my knees. And I'm going to share the struggle, allow Him to take my anxiety for the past, the present and the future, and tell Him all about it. And I know—I *know*—that He is going to listen, love me and answer with great answers! He always does.

And I would ask, if you know me or even if you don't, please challenge me. If you see me or talk to me or want to email me,

ask me if I'm being the prayer warrior I want to be. Hold me accountable to all these things I write. And if you'd like, I will do the same for you.

It's time to fight the good fight of faith on our knees—for ourselves, for our children and for each other!

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